

8-25-2016

# Finding the Self in Tension: The Importance of Play for Embodied Consciousness in Post-Kantian Philosophical Anthropology and Psychology

Jaime Thomas Denison

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/phil\\_etds](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/phil_etds)



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Denison, Jaime Thomas. "Finding the Self in Tension: The Importance of Play for Embodied Consciousness in Post-Kantian Philosophical Anthropology and Psychology." (2016). [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/phil\\_etds/1](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/phil_etds/1)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

Jaime Thomas Denison

*Candidate*

Department of Philosophy

*Department*

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Dissertation Committee:*

Dr. Adrian Johnston , Chairperson

Dr. Iain Thomson

Dr. Brent Kalar

Dr. William Bristow

**FINDING THE SELF IN TENSION:  
THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY FOR  
EMBODIED CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN  
POST-KANTIAN  
PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

**by**

**JAIME THOMAS DENISON**

B.A., Philosophy, University of the Pacific, 2005  
M.A., Philosophy, University of California, Irvine, 2008

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**in Philosophy**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**July 2016**

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents

Erika and Tommy Denison

for their unconditional love and life-long support of my education.

To my partner

Jason Wilby

for his love,

patience,

and

guidance during my entire graduate studies and our shared adventures.

**AND**

To my partner

Brian Rasmussen

for his love,

enthusiasm,

and

encouragement when writing the dissertation was challenging.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation and thanks to my committee chair, Professor Adrian Johnston, who has been incredibly supportive throughout this project and always offered valuable feedback on my work. Without his guidance and persistent help this dissertation would not have been possible, and his numerous seminars that I have taken over the years have greatly shaped my philosophical outlook.

I would like to thank my committee members, Professor Iain Thomson, Professor Brent Kalar and Professor William Bristow, whose seminars and individual perspectives have greatly contributed to the conception and methodology of this project. Without them, I would not have the depth in German philosophy that I have today.

In addition, I would like to thank Professor Étienne Balibar, who was my mentor at the Critical Theory Institute at University of California, Irvine, and an avid supporter of my work on Schiller, Hegel and Spinoza. Also, I would like to thank Professor Martin Schwab, who first introduced me to the area of Play Studies through Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* as I was gaining interest in Schiller at UCI.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Eleanor Witttrup, who introduced me to Kant and served as my advisor for my honours thesis project on Nietzsche, and Professor Lou Matz, whose first-year seminar motivated me to transfer from mechanical engineering to philosophy while I was studying at University of the Pacific. Without their guidance and friendship, I would not be where I am today.

**FINDING THE SELF IN TENSION:  
THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY FOR EMBODIED CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN  
POST-KANTIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

by

**Jaime Thomas Denison**

**B.A., Philosophy, University of the Pacific, 2005**

**M.A., Philosophy, University of California, Irvine, 2008**

**Doctor of Philosophy, Philosophy, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 2016**

**ABSTRACT**

My dissertation looks at how four figures in the German philosophical tradition employ a similar concept of play in their models of the “Ich”, often translated as “Self”, as they explore the complexities of establishing a unity within embodied consciousness. These four figures are: Friedrich Schiller, F.W.J. Schelling, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. I situate this concept of play within the contemporary debate of the interdisciplinary field of play studies, showing that what emerges is a theory of play that avoids marginalizing it to children and leisure, but rather recognizes it as a state of consciousness that provides a semblance of self and a meaningful engagement with the world. However, these models of self that emerge provide an alternate conception compared to the mainstream versions that put emphasis on autonomy and self-transparency. Instead, these four figures acknowledge that consciousness is embedded in the world, thus it must consider its local relationships to its physical and social environment, as well as the embodied unconscious that it emerges from. As I progress through the four chapters, it will become apparent how these revised understandings of the self have a significant impact in how we approach areas like moral philosophy,

political philosophy, critical theory, philosophy of biology, cognitive science, philosophical anthropology, and philosophy of art. Specifically we will see in what important ways consciousness is decentred in these accounts, thus in turn denying any particular consciousness a transcendental view that can finally settle fundamental philosophical, political and cultural issues.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION: PLAY THEORY AND THE SEMBLANCE OF SELF .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: FRIEDRICH SCHILLER’S DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAY CONCEPT IN THE AESTHETIC STATE.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: F.W.J. SCHELLING’S USE OF PLAY IN <i>SYSTEM DES TRANZENDENTALEN IDEALISMUS</i> .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: PLAY AS AFFIRMATION IN FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE’S CHILD.....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: PLAY AS THE AMBIGUITY OF THE EGO IN SIGMUND FREUD’S METAPSYCHOLOGY .....</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>CONCLUSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY FOR EMBODIED CONCIOUSNESS .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>240</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### Play Theory and the Semblance of Self

“This masculine kind of dogmatic abstract reasoning usually overreaches itself, thinks itself mature, and falls into the trap. Self-conscious man cannot use *conscious reason* to overcome his own impatience; for that he must surrender his conviction of the supreme importance of his own awareness and of the maturity of his reasoning; only if he can do that is he saved from humiliation. He must take his self-awareness with a little irony.”

– Lancelot Law Whyte, *The Unconscious Before Freud*

In the passage above, Whyte discusses his central concern that the twentieth-century does not fully understand the significance of Freud’s conception of the unconscious, a development that is in fact indebted to an intellectual history going back to the eighteenth century. Given the rapid progress of technology and science in the late modern period, it is easy to use the narrative of progress to occlude the aspects of our society that are repressed, held under an order structured by an impatient rationality that thinks itself as already mature and enlightened. As Paul Bishop notes in “The unconscious from the Storm and Stress to Weimar Classicism: the dialectic of time and pleasure”, the ego that emerges as a thinking thing in Descartes’ *cogito* has traditionally been thought of as self-transparent, since all one’s being *is* what one thinks consciously, and therefore is only consciousness (Bishop 31). In conceptualizing the identity of the mind as consciousness, which Freud objects to explicitly in his work, we philosophically relegate out the possibility of parts of the self that are not visible to the stated “I” or the ego. Yet Whyte argues that developing within the Enlightenment, a period in which it was hoped that self-transparency would be possible through rationality, another understanding of the self emerged that made room for the unconscious and the continual changing limits of the

self. It is this thread that Whyte feels we need to research more if we are to get passed some of the major issues we face in modernity.

One prominent issue in late modernity is finding a way to consistently think about the self that includes autonomy and freedom. Although many of these projects tend to be embedded in conceptions of the ego and its autonomy, thus relying heavily on self-transparency, issues of alienation and narcissism point to deep problems in how Western thought has attempted to frame the individual within the larger society and environment. The fact that the individual finds herself in material conditions that were not of her choosing that in turn shape her choices and values (often revealed through models of subject formation) undermines the autonomy that one should experience in these philosophical models. On the other hand, with the individual being overly concerned with her own freedom, the concerns about one's duties to society often fall on the side of burdens that reinforce this alienation, generating a variety of narcissism that makes one turn away from the world. Thus the alienated individual, although often used to indicate that the society is deficient in its arrangement, also points to the fact that embodiment has its own considerations that are often ignored in philosophical accounts. We already see these concerns in the late eighteenth-century with figures like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Schiller. Schiller notes in *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1794) that:

Jetzt aber herrscht das Bedürfnis und beugt die gesunkene Menschheit unter sein tyrannisches Joch. Der Nutzen ist das grosse Idol der Zeit, dem alle Kräfte fronen und alle Talente huldigen sollen. (Schiller *Sämtliche* 572)

Schiller uses the word *Nutzen*, which means “utility” in an economic sense, thus revealing his concern about how the individual is often forced to develop under economic conditions that detract from a more dignified path. In the second letter, which this quotation is taken from, Schiller describes his society as one where individuals are trampled over by the chaos of material circumstances, which not only prevents people from realizing their own potential, but also inhibits them from really identifying with the community. Given his concerns about the violence emerging from the French Revolution, Schiller argues it was not only the material conditions that prevented the foundation of a republic based on freedom and human rights, but also the lack of rational development of humanity as a whole, which would allow a society to work with and shape its material conditions. Yet what is surprising is that Schiller does not argue that what we need is to subjugate the material conditions in favour of rationality (as we will see in Chapter 1), but rather that what needs to change is our flawed philosophical model of human freedom that ignores the demands of a formal will embodied in a contingent time and place. Given that we see two very opposite feelings within the individual, both alienation and narcissism, this fragmentation indicates deeper problems of how we conceive the self in relation to the rational ego.

The period spanning the German Enlightenment to German Romanticism marks an important period of transformation for the concept of the self. However, it remains unclear what notions were established during this complex collection of debates and continue to play a role in how we think of ourselves. Obviously Kant has a major role in a number of philosophical developments, but we can also view him as a transitional figure with regards to how German-speaking culture responded to the anxiety

surrounding the “self” or “ego” (*das Ich*). On the one hand, we have commentators like Karl Ameriks, Christine Korsgaard, and J.B. Schneewind who place great importance on Kant for bringing forth the emphasis on autonomy within the conception of the self, and attempt to reconstruct individualism around this development. In *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, Ameriks is concerned with how the development of autonomy after Kant had been the result of several misinterpretations of Kant’s critical philosophy (particularly from Reinhold), and thus counters objections that the concept of autonomy leads to a collapse of the system. Ameriks concerns himself with keeping autonomy as a central component to the self, and is thus willing to give a radically new interpretation of Kant to keep this project going. Korsgaard, on the other hand, goes about preserving the importance of autonomy within agency through her concept of self-constitution. In *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integration*, she integrates Kantian notions of agency and autonomy with Aristotelian notions of teleology and Plato’s philosophical psychology. Thus, autonomy and agency are revealed over time as activities that are focused upon building and preserving the self, creating a space for normativity. A final example of this tradition of autonomy is J.B. Schneewind. In “The Use of Autonomy in Ethical Theory”, Schneewind argues that in reconfiguring how we conceive the individual, we should not abandon autonomy as a ground for the self and morality. Given that autonomy became integrated into moral theory rather late in philosophy, he admits there are problems with previous articulations of the concept, and these tensions must be worked out with time. However, he does think that those who want to remove autonomy from how we conceive of the self all together are acting prematurely and have no solid arguments for doing so. Although I do find these philosophical accounts

remarkable in their own right, in that they provide very careful treatments of the problem, they tend to collectively assume a transparency of the self that is difficult to account for. In all three of the examples provided, it is usually assumed that the autonomous individual must somehow be completely aware of its own agency (although it is quite problematic to say that Kant himself assumes this). These accounts tend to centre on autonomy and often leave little room for parts of the self to be out of conscious view, due to the fact that it seems deficient if the legislator of the self is not fully aware of all that goes on in her kingdom.

However, this focus on autonomy ignores other developments within German intellectual thought in the late eighteenth-century, developments that were focused on this problem of the *Ich* and that did not place autonomy at the centre of their philosophical psychology. Major figures such as Rousseau, Karl Philipp Moritz, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe were all deeply concerned with how to conceptualize the *Ich* due to the assumption that such a thing is not necessarily a given as it is presented in traditions of individualism. Fritz Breithaupt argues in “Goethe and the Ego” that the Pietist movement in Germany was one of the major influences that began this negative conception of the *Ich*, since they insisted upon a continual distrust of one’s own thoughts (Breithaupt 80). As autonomy became secularized, so did this negative conception of the ego. One major figure to contribute to this was Moritz of the *Sturm und Drang* period, focusing on the fictional aspects of the *Ich*. As Breithaupt explains, the *Ich* is *thought of* as autonomous, but this is actually a necessary fiction that protects the self from being absorbed into the institutions that one is surrounded by. Thus, the self becomes a performance without substance, a narrative that one fabricates to provide a differentiation (Breithaupt 84-85).

Anthony Krupp also points out important shifts in Moritz's thought, where the self no longer comes before the relationships it has with others. Instead, the perspective of others feeds into the very self-consciousness that is under scrutiny in this period (Krupp 120-2). Breithaupt points out that Goethe also explored various models of the *Ich*, going through one model that identifies the "Ich" as a place of obsession, and then another model as exclusion. Goethe finally proposes that the "self" is the internalization of dialogue, thus giving the concept content that is open-ended. As Breithaupt asserts in his article, "the self appears both as the origin and the result of modernity" (Breithaupt 77), pointing to a difficulty that we encounter in current discussions within the humanities when this concept is brought in. Although the tradition of autonomy has often taken the self for granted, the investigations of the *Sturm und Drang* period point to a general anxiety of finding positive content in this concept. The human sciences often ignore this peculiar status of the self when talking about individuality and subjectivity, but this has led to various problems and tensions when we move forward to politics, ethics, and culture (Breithaupt 100). I think in ignoring the problem, the underlying tensions concerning individuality become extremely difficult to solve, and also legitimize the concerns put forward by Whyte.

This anxiety surrounding the self is often bound up with demands for transparency and unity, and their lack has been a major obstacle in providing a sufficient model in traditions focused on autonomy. Given that many scholars seem to point to the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries as crucial intellectual periods concerned with the self, it is the focus of this project to trace that thread of discourse and investigate how it offers a substantially different conception of the "Ich" rooted in play and tension. This

thread, instead of emphasizing autonomy as self-transparency and unity, puts forth the importance of the unconscious and tensions generated by embodiment, and utilizes the concept of play as a means to continually mediate these tensions. The four figures that I will explore and connect together in this thread are Friedrich Schiller, F.W.J. Schelling, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud, which a very similar concept of play emerges from these four figures as they discuss the embodiment of the “Ich”. Friedrich Schiller’s development of the play concept as aesthetic semblance will provide the basis of my definition of play for this project, but I will interrogate and develop this definition in the context of play theory, an interdisciplinary field starting in the early twentieth-century.

One of the most foundational texts for modern theories of play has been Johan Huizinga’s 1938 philological work *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. The central argument of this book centres on the claim that play is in fact older than human culture, and that one can find this “play-concept” in the various activities of culture, such as philosophy, law, science, literature, and war. Yet before he explains this argument, he defines play by exploring different characteristics that we often see in play behaviour:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social grouping which tend to surround themselves with

secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (Huizinga 13)

We see some important and helpful conditions emerge from this definition. First of all, the activity must be internally motivated rather than forced, and the individual must be completely engaged with the activity. We also see that the individual is aware of the boundaries of the play space, and acknowledges that the rules or order within that space may not apply outside of it. Yet, there are elements of this definition that are quite problematic. First, it isn't clear why Huizinga integrates secrecy as a major element of play, even if it is described as just a "tendency". There are many instances of play activities carried out in the open. Many children feel comfortable expressing what is happening in the play space, even to people who are not actively participating. The other major issue with Huizinga's definition is that, as Brian Upton points out in *The Aesthetics of Play*, it is separated off and kept distinct from the "ordinary" as being "not serious", and he specifically leaves out activities that are materially motivated (14-5). This leaves out important activities such as casino gambling and professional sports, which many people would identify as play even when large amounts of money are involved. Even more problematic with this definition is that, taken seriously, it would itself undermine much of Huizinga's project, since he states that human activities like war and law are grounded in the play concept. It is quite difficult to see how the courtroom and the fighting between two groups are "not serious" and separated from material interests.

Another prominent figure in modern play theory is Roger Caillois, who wrote *Man, Play and Games* in 1958. Caillois recognizes how Huizinga undermines his own project in *Homo Ludens* by making the definition both too general and too narrow (Caillois 4), and thus excludes activities like gambling, while including what he considers to be corrupted forms of play like professional sports. He thus refines the definition of play as an activity that satisfies the following conditions:

1. *Free*: in which playing is not obligatory; if it were, it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion;
2. *Separate*: circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance;
3. *Uncertain*: the course of which cannot be determined, nor the result attained beforehand, and some latitude for innovations being left to the player's initiative;
4. *Unproductive*: creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and, except for the exchange of property among the players, ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game;
5. *Governed by rules*: under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts;
6. *Make-believe*; accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life. (Caillois 9-10)

Condition 1 preserves the idea that the engagement with the activity is internally motivated, while condition 2 maintains Huizinga's emphasis on consciously establishing the boundaries of the play activity. Condition 3 is an important addition to Huizinga's definition, and Huizinga even discusses the importance of tension in play, although he fails to include it in his formal definition (Huizinga 10-1). If the players already know *completely* how the activity will end, most play theorists would acknowledge that play is not present. This is even the case with repetitious activities like acting out a scene or rereading a text, where the tension can reside within deriving a new interpretation or noticing new details. Yet condition 4 is still problematic, even with its attempt to include the exchange of property such as gambling and lawsuits. The fact that Caillois insists that play remain unproductive automatically excludes things like fine art and literature, as well as hobbies that may involve building or restoring physical objects. Also, both conditions 5 and 6 define play again as separating out from the ordinary, real environment. We can, however, think of sports as an example where the conventions of the game are not the only thing to take into consideration. As Upton points out, the physical laws are quite important in most sports even when they aren't explicit. This is why he argues that we should replace the idea of "rules" with "constraints" (16-7). In addition to Upton's insight, we should also see that these constraints might very well come into tension with one another rather than being a systematic order. The fact that the conventions of tennis define through lines whether a serve is "in" or "out", the physical surface affects the bounce and speed of the ball, and there is a net physically obstructing the server's box requires that the player negotiate such discordant constraints to be successful in the game. Also, as Miguel Sicart argues in *Play Matters*, play does not

necessarily suspend the context of everyday life. In fact, he argues that most games take up the surrounding contexts and alter them (11-2). Although Sicart focuses on physical spaces and technologies as examples of context being taken up in the play activity, one can also think of how we engage our opponents in the play space. It is not as though our relationship with another is completely suspended when we play with or against others in a game, but it certainly is modified once we establish the boundaries of the play activity. For example, my fondness for an individual may make me more mischievous or more lenient in my competitiveness, while my aversion for another person could make me more pitiless or distant in the game. Yet as Sicart suggests, this doesn't separate us out completely against real life, and I may have personal feelings from my ordinary life invested in the activity.

Instead of defining play as opposed to the real world, I argue that we should define it as a particular relationship that consciousness has to itself and the world. I understand the motivations for why Huizinga and Caillois try to separate play out from "the ordinary", since a definition of play that makes it appear everywhere would certainly make the concept seemingly vague. As biologist Gordon M. Burghardt argues in *The Genesis of Animal Play: Testing the Limits*, we must be careful in how we define play so that we avoid anthropocentric biases that would exclude complex animals like horses and dolphins, but also should avoid carelessly projecting play behaviour on life that doesn't have the capacity for it, such as bacteria and clams (45-52). For example, although cephalopods are a member of the Mollusca phylum (which includes clams and oysters), there have been a few species of octopuses in captivity that display complex behaviours including play (Burghardt 372-4). Yet this behaviour was not recognized as play for

quite some time because ethologists never thought to introduce toys in the aquarium.

Thus, I think Miguel Cicart advocates a better route for defining play when he states:

Play is a singular individual experience—shared, yes, but meaningful only in the way it scaffolds an individual experience of the world. Through play, we are in the world.

Play is like language – a way of being in the world, of making sense of it. It takes place in a context as a balance between creation and destruction, between adherence to a structure and the pleasures of destruction. Playing is freedom. (Cicart 18)

By defining play in this way, we not only establish boundaries around a particular time and space for the activity to take place, but we also require a particular mode of engagement with the world without having to suspend ordinary contexts and constraints. It would make more sense for a complete retreat from reality to be an instance of daydreaming or fantasy rather than play, which Freud is explicit when making this distinction (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, Cicart is not the first to define play as a mode of consciousness, and the particular thread I will trace through this project starting with Schiller brings with it concepts of the self that are unavoidable.

I argue in particular that Schiller's definition of play, as it emerges from *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, brings with it a concept of the self that is a consequence of Kant's critical philosophy. As Schiller started writing the letters, he seems particularly focused on combining §9 (the play of the faculties), §10-§17 (Beauty as the form of purposiveness without the objective representation of an end) and §65 (organic life being both its cause and effect) of *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, which

results in his definition of play through aesthetic semblance. In particular, Schiller utilizes the insight that the aesthetic judgement, as a reflecting judgement,<sup>1</sup> is an instance in which consciousness becomes aware that what it believes subjectively as a universal of its particular object cannot be grounded in objective concepts (thus it is not objectively universal despite the judgement). Yet what is important about this awareness is that it doesn't collapse the experience of beauty even when consciousness is aware of finitude of this judgement. Thus, for Schiller, play as aesthetic semblance (*ästhetischen Schein*) is an honest engagement and appreciation with a particular semblance (*Schein*) that doesn't confuse or reduce the aesthetic down to either finite actuality or infinite truth (which he identifies as logical semblance) (Schiller *SW* 655-8). Thus, the "I" that must sacrifice the infinity that it possesses in the moral state in order to manifest itself as a finite form in the physical state can still take itself seriously within the aesthetic state while realizing its own limits.

Thus, extracting from Schiller's philosophical work, I will provide the following stipulative definition of play as a point of departure for this project:

Play is an activity of consciousness that fulfils four necessary conditions:

1. There is an active positing and awareness of the boundaries in time and space in which the play activities have meaning. This meaning generated within this field is therefore not diminished if it cannot extend beyond these acknowledged boundaries or limits.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kant distinguishes reflecting (*reflektierende*) and determining judgement (*bestimmende Urteils*) in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* in that the determining judgements connects a particular object to a concept already grasped, while reflecting judgements attempt to generate a concept through its consideration of a particular object (Kant *Band X*, 24-5).

2. There is an engagement with the environment or external world that resists the intentions of the self through various, and sometimes conflicting, constraints.
3. There is an indeterminacy concerning the play activity, in regards that there is no pre-determined or final resolution achieved that cannot be revisited.
4. There is an identification of an “I” within the set boundaries that finds meaning in the activity, including the tentative resolution reached by the activity.

Condition 1 adapts from Huizinga and Caillois what I think is important about their requirement of establishing boundaries within space and time, yet avoids the condition that play must be separated off from ordinary life or reality. This is what we see when Schiller insists that play is aesthetic semblance, since it is more concerned with how we engage honestly with our current experience within its limits rather than retreating from it either in mere fantasy or by universalizing our experience beyond our limits. Condition 2 incorporates Upton’s insights of the importance of constraints and the feeling of resistance due to the embodiment of play. This is why Schiller insists that the sensuous drive, which represents our embodiment of the world, must be harmonized with the formal drive for the “I” to have content, since the empty form of the “I” is merely fantasy without this physical content. Although the formal “I” may resent this process of the world resisting its intentions, Schiller insists that this is what allows the “I” to become self-aware. This condition becomes prominent in Nietzsche’s work after *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in which his focus on pain reveals that consciousness, as a forming faculty, relies on incorporating the tensions and resistance it encounters to form an interpretation of itself and the world (see Chapter 3). Condition 3 modifies Caillois’ condition

requiring uncertainty, since play cannot occur if the outcome of the activity is already known. This becomes crucial to Schiller's idea of aesthetic semblance, since the formal drive and the sensuous drive do not come into harmony if there is a static hierarchy established between them. By extension, this also means that the play activity cannot provide a permanent resolution, since the repetition of the activity must be able to yield a different result to avoid predeterminism. This becomes clear in games, in which the "winner" or "champion" can change constantly in rematches in board games and sports without generating any confusion. Schelling will be particularly important in developing this condition in *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* of 1800 in the context of the aesthetic, in which he argues that the product of aesthetic activity must remain open to new determinations in order to not collapse into a mere artefact (see Chapter 2). Finally, condition 4 adapts Huizinga and Caillois' requirement of having internal motivation while avoiding the problematic term of "freedom". As we move through the chapters, we will see that the concept of "freedom" within the play activity is itself problematic when thinking how the play activity is carried out, since it is more so a navigation of desire and constraint. Yet the desire to engage in play and alter the order of the field must already come from the outside, which is always identified with the infinite, empty "I" that can never be satisfied with the finite. For Schiller, the formal drive remains important in providing meaning because it is capable of stringing together sensuous impressions into a narrative, but it must attach the "I" to each of these impressions. However, the last part of condition 4 is important to ensure that the activity is play, since the player must posit a finite "I" that is capable of finding fulfilment within the activity while being aware of the dissatisfaction of the infinite, formal "I" that exists outside of the established boundaries.

This particular dynamic will be developed further by Freud, who develops the concept of the Ego (*das Ich*) as a semblance of unity that plays with the forces and dissatisfactions of the Id (*das Es*) and the Super Ego (*das Über-Ich*) (see Chapter 4).

As we will see in the following chapters, the introduction of the play concept increasingly complicates the concept of “Ich” or “self” if we try to assume that it is a determined entity. By the term “self”, I am referring to the unity consciousness tries to achieve when it becomes reflective and falls into tension with itself by being both its subject and its object. Once the “I” is perceived as both an infinite subject that accompanies each thought and a determinate object that is the result of finite, temporal forces (some of which are not immediately present), consciousness must constantly play with these two aspects of itself to avoid alienation and narcissism. Yet the German “Ich”, when it is not translated as “I”, is often translated as “self”, often masking over this issue of internal division. With Schiller, the concept of self remains more or less intact when it plays, since it brings into a non-dominant harmony the “I” of the sensuous drive and the “I” of the formal drive. The tension between the drives, Schiller notes, does constitute the very nature of how we experience the self, but this tension is understood as a constant ebb and flow that maintains the non-hierarchical harmony. In these particular cases of aesthetic semblance, we can then translate the “Ich” as an integrated self in Schiller’s work. Yet Schelling, Nietzsche, and Freud focus much more on the self-consciousness that is generated by the very tensions within the “self”, thus seeing the unity that is desired by the eternal “I” as unachievable. In these philosophers, there can be no actual reference for a “self” as a unity because it is the very tension that makes this form of self-consciousness show up for itself. Thus, in these chapters, when working within the

philosophical accounts themselves, I will often avoid referring to a self. Instead, I will often refer to an “ego”,<sup>2</sup> indicating that the self is the site of play of these tensions that the “Ich” is attempting to reconcile. However, given that consciousness still attempts to bring itself into a unity, since its content is this tension it finds itself in, the quest for a self remains inescapable. Play, which provides the self as an aesthetic semblance that also acknowledges its existence as a tension, thus provides a way to honestly engage, i.e. to take seriously, the finite manifestations of the “I” while recognizing its incompleteness. It is in this manner that we can understand the self through play in each of the philosophers of this project.

Thus, in Chapter 1 (“Friedrich Schiller’s Development of the Play Concept in the Aesthetic State”), I primarily focus on *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* from 1795, which sets out to justify the pursuit of aesthetic education through the centrality of the play drive in the constitution of the self. I first explore the social and psychological problem that Schiller sees in the European Enlightenment, culminating in the Reign of Terror. Specifically, Schiller acknowledges that reason has emerged from nature and now recognizes itself in a physical state that does not sustain its own dignity from the moral state. As such, the initial reaction is to eliminate the physical state in favour of the moral state, subjugating our sensuous side to our rational side. Schiller goes to great length explaining why domination of one aspect over the other is unfeasible, and thus an organic harmony must be achieved where both sides are equally recognized and supported. Thus, Schiller posits the play drive that

---

<sup>2</sup> In the case of Freud, whose idea of the unconscious increases the complexity of how we conceive of these tensions perceived by consciousness, I will use “Ego”, “psyche” or “organism” (depending on context) instead of the ambiguous term of “self”.

allows our two aspects to be sublated and brought together, bringing our moral self functionally into our physical self. This brings the individual into the aesthetic state, and it is in this state where we are a fully realized self. I further argue that Schiller's concept of play is directly linked to his discussion of aesthetic semblance, as I discussed above, which entails that Schiller conceives of play as an honest engagement with appearances, and that missing this aspect leads to serious misinterpretations of his work.

In Chapter 2 ("F.W.J. Schelling's Use of Play in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*"), I focus primarily on Schelling's work around 1800, looking closely at the problem he explicates for German Idealism as it tries to maintain itself as a critical philosophy. In particular, he highlights how a tension has developed between theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy, known respectively as *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy. In order to maintain the interdependence of these two aspects of philosophy (and thus avoid the dogmatism that results when one is collapsed into the other), Schelling turns to aesthetic activity at the end of *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* as the culmination of transcendental philosophy and the meeting of Nature and Ego. To understand why Schelling makes this move, I analyze the structure and dynamics of the "Ich", the Ego, as it becomes aware of itself as an outgrowth of unconscious Nature. It soon becomes clear that self-consciousness can only be maintained if it remains in a state of becoming, requiring a mutable limit that can yield the Ego as both a subject and object to itself. This tension collapses when it remains in the ideal, since it is only intellectual activity rather than a substance, and thus Schelling uses aesthetic activity to bring this ideal activity into the space and time of the real. However, one condition that Schelling insists upon concerning aesthetic activity is that its

product, the artwork, must maintain the tension of the previous intellectual activity between its finite consciousness and infinite unconscious ground, thus resisting collapse into a finite set theoretical determinations. I then end the chapter with how this dynamic fits into Schiller's play concept, expanding on the role of the tension that constitutes self-consciousness, and Schelling maintains this dynamic all the way up to his 1842 lectures on mythology.

In Chapter 3 ("Play As Affirmation in Friedrich Nietzsche's Child"), I explore Nietzsche's work from 1882 to 1887, looking at the importance of play in his concept of the "Ich" based on his physiological understanding of consciousness. I first look at the major problem Nietzsche sees in Modern Europe, specifically the way that intellectuals and religious followers turn away from the world and the body. Nietzsche conceives of consciousness as a new organic development that finds its ground in the body, and is primarily based in pain, error, and the interpretations of this content. When we explore this concept further, we see that consciousness is deeply tied to its embodiment and social relations, but it can fall into self-deception if it cannot affirm the pain that constitutes itself. Thus, Nietzsche argues for a morality that is self-affirming, conscientious and honest, and makes play an integral part of any moral system that can bring us out of nihilism and intolerance. I then end the chapter by looking closely at Nietzsche's metaphor of the child in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, arguing that the child is an important figure in that it achieves the ability to play that is constitutive of Nietzsche's idea of self-affirmation.

Finally, in Chapter 4 ("Play as the Ambiguity of the Ego in Sigmund Freud's Metapsychology"), I explore how play is an integral part in how the Ego (*das Ich*)

functions in Freud's work after 1920. Although the previous three chapters all touch upon the issue of the unconscious, Freud is the first to develop the unconscious as an aggressive component of the psyche, and I look at his arguments for this conception. I look at the major shift he made in his metapsychology in 1920 in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* when he introduces the death drive, reconceiving the psyche as being comprised of the Ego, Id and Super-Ego. While marking this shift, Freud brings in play explicitly through his discussion of the "Fort-Da" game, noting that play itself may not be solely rooted in pleasure because it sometimes repeats traumatic events for the Ego to work through. Thus looking at his earlier discussions at play, and how it is modified with his treatment in 1920, I argue that play becomes a significant part of the Ego because the Ego is a structure that has no force or identity itself, but rather plays with the content and directions provided by the Id, Super Ego and external reality. In this vein, the psychoanalytic session becomes a play space itself, with the intent to make the Ego recognize itself as the site of conflict between these different forces and maintains flexibility in how it identifies with these tensions depending on what the context demands.

## CHAPTER 1

### Schiller's Development of the Play Concept in the Aesthetic State

By the time that Friedrich Schiller published *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* in *Die Horen* in 1795 (in the months of January, February, and June), a number of vectors converged that formulated a perplexing question concerning the “Self”, or the “Ich”, that interfaced with several areas of philosophy. Not only did this work concern itself with aesthetic theory, which is understandable given Schiller's role as a German literary figure, but it also had to deal with philosophy of nature, political philosophy, moral philosophy, philosophical psychology, and philosophical anthropology. His approach attempted to use art to bridge over several considerations in how the self had been analyzed, acknowledging that humans in modern times have become divided between the different parts of their existence. Yet if we look closely, it is not art per se that serves as the focal point of the self, but rather the play drive that produces art, and by which art leaves a trace of human play in the material world. In this chapter, I argue that Schiller conceives of play as an organic harmony as opposed to a mechanical harmony, where the whole must serve the parts and much as the parts equally serve the whole, and the sublation of tensions between the parts of self occur while there is a delight in aesthetic semblance. As such, we need to be attentive to how Schiller is expanding on the common conception of play and aesthetic, which Schiller aims to include all activities that find a harmony between nature and reason, which he considers to be living form. First, I give a bit of background concerning how Schiller sets up this project of the self and the state of society during his time, and how this current state of affairs requires his philosophical psychology of drives

that represent our divided ontological existence. Then I go into detail concerning why play is a necessary component to his project, and what elements he uses that characterize this concept. Finally, I address a few interpretations of Schiller's concept of play that have been prevalent in Schiller scholarship, and address why these interpretations are problematic and obscure Schiller's aim in offering play as a unifying concept.

As the French and German Enlightenment moved forward on the project of autonomy, the question of the self became a pointed source of anxiety in German intellectual circles. In particular, the *Sturm und Drang* period, in which Schiller took part before initiating the *Weimarer Klassik*, was concerned about the establishment of individuality and originality that in fact seemed to be at the same time assumed in theories of autonomy and missing in everyday life. Fritz Breithaupt notes in "Goethe and the Ego" that the use of the term "Das Ich" had become quite prevalent starting in the 1770s, but by 1780 alternative references to the "I" were not very common (81). This particular usage that nominalizes the "I" indicates the separating out of consciousness from other aspects of the individual, while the traditional Greco-Roman models of the self tended to rely on triadic structures of body, soul, and spirit. Yet in separating "das Ich" from everything else, this "I" inevitably became vacuous. Although in Kantianism this vacuity is explained as the noumenal self, the *Sturm und Drang* figures suspected that perhaps there was a deceptive quality of "das Ich". Although conceptually it grants the self independence, it does so at the cost of excluding material reality. Karl Phillip Mortiz and Wolfgang von Goethe both take up this theme, and attempt to work out a solution to this paradox by way of embracing a model of the self that isn't given in the traditional assumptions of rationality.

Despite the issue of whether the self has content or not, another important development is the temporalization of the self that emerges from Rousseau's *Emile*, which is brought out by his concerns on childhood. He opens in the preface of *Emile* highlighting a major assumption within philosophy, especially within the social contract theory tradition based in individualism:

Childhood is unknown. Starting from the false idea one has of it, the farther one goes, the more one loses one's way. The wisest men concentrate on what it is important for men to know without considering what children are in a condition to learn. They are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man. (33-4).

Rousseau is concerned with philosophical approaches that assume that the individual comes into being fully rational and independent, ignoring the important steps of development that are needed to make an individual autonomous from nature and society. Without recognizing our initial state of dependence and arationality, we are in danger of self-deception, thinking that we are independent from others when we materially and psychologically are deeply tied to those around us. In "Other Relations: the Pre-History of *le moi* and (*das*) *Ich* in Jean Jacques Rousseau, Karl Philipp Moritz, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte", Anthony Krupp highlights this shift in thinking about the "I", and its implications for German thought as it tried to grapple with a consistent model of the self. However, as Rousseau's struggle came over into German thought, Krupp notices that literary authors (represented by Moritz) embraced the temporality of the "I", to the point of jeopardizing the substance of the concept, while philosophers like Fichte embraced an atemporal development to avoid the issues troubling his literary contemporaries. This

divide between German intellectuals, I argue, plays an important feature in Schiller's project as he tries to grapple with a model of a self that is ontologically divided between temporality and atemporality.

After giving an introduction to his general approach in *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, Schiller provides in the second to thirteenth letter a meticulous layout of the problem of political freedom based on anthropological observations of modern human beings in European civilization. In the second letter, Schiller openly acknowledges the French Reign of Terror as a pressing issue, given that it was just ending as the letters were being published, but he insists that he can connect this issue of political freedom of man to the realm of the *schönen Kunst*:

Aber sollte ich von der Freiheit, die mir von Ihnen verstattet wird, nicht vielleicht einen bessern Gebrauch machen können, als Ihre Aufmerksamkeit auf dem Schauplatz der schönen Kunst zu beschäftigen? Ist es nicht wenigstens ausser der Zeit, sich nach einem Gesetzbuch für die ästhetische Welt umzusehen, da die Angelegenheiten der moralischen ein so viel näheres Interesse darbieten und der philosophische Untersuchungsgeist durch die Zeitumstände so nachdrücklich aufgefordert wird, sich mit dem vollkommensten aller Kunstwerke, mit dem Bau einer wahren politischen Freiheit zu beschäftigen? (Schiller 571-2)<sup>3</sup>

Although Schiller wants to put forward the importance of the aesthetic to man, both in terms of aesthetic education and the fine arts, he does not set aside the pressing question as to why, from the perspective of the German Enlightenment that had great political

---

<sup>3</sup> All citations from Schiller's work in German comes from *Sämtliche Werke: Band V: Erzählungen, Theoretische Schriften* from Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

hopes invested in modern rationality and freedom, the French Revolution ended in such disappointment and horror. Schiller was not content with dispensing with reason as a fundamental tool in the project of political revolution, one that would restore the dignity of mankind in the modern age. Instead, he focuses on the tragedy being the result of an imbalance within humanity that could potentially lead to its own destruction. Blind faith in reason ends up hindering its own progress, since it moves ahead further than what the material reality can provide. Thus if modern humanity is to ever become sustainable, there is a need to develop of conception of the self in such a way that doesn't merely privilege rationality, but rather takes into account all of the components of the self.<sup>4</sup>

Schiller sets up this problematic by openly stating that man has emerged from nature (as we see with Rousseau), and this requires us to look back at the development to properly move forward to a moral state that also incorporates the physical. Humanity only slowly emerged from nature into his conscious state, described as his coming out of “seinem sinnlichen Schlummer” (574) and finding himself in the political community. Therefore it is understandable that the current political state may not match the dignity of humanity, which our dignity demands a rational order that recognizes us as persons. The reason for this is that “die Not richtete denselben nach blossen Naturgesetzen ein, ehe er es nach Vernunftgesetzen konnte” (574). Since the physical necessities of human survival come first before our rational consciousness could emerge, the organization of

---

<sup>4</sup> In *The Author, Art, and the Market*, Martha Woodmansee reads Schiller as a bourgeois elitist, focusing much of her reading in relation to Schiller's devastating critique of the populist project of poet Gottfried August Bürger. In her reading of the first section of the *Aesthetic Letters*, she does note that the French Revolution failed because man was incapable of self-rule through a lack of developed reason (58). Although this is partially true, Woodmansee seems to ignore the passages where Schiller is also criticizing the intellectual elite for their lack of grounding, which is also a dangerous imbalance.

society did not form according to the demands of the moral state that is formed as an ideal within our new capacity of rationality. Thus it is understandable that we should be dissatisfied with the current arrangement as we become more critical of it, but we must also recognize that it was not due to malicious intent or purposeful subjugation. What is interesting here is that Schiller establishes immediately that humanity, in its current state, is a product of nature, and this fact should not be as easily shoved aside as many philosophers have done before. In acknowledging that the human is a rational animal, he also makes the animal, thus sensuous, part just as essential as the rational part of the characterization.<sup>5</sup> Yet as one awakens from blind necessity, the other aspects of the self allows a transformation of this blind instinct: "... wie er, um nur ein Beispiel zu geben, den gemeinen Charakter, den das Bedürfnis der Geschlechtsliebe aufdrückte, durch Sittlichkeit auslöscht und durch Schönheit veredelt" (574). Sexual love, for example, becomes transformed as the self enters this awakening, yet Schiller indicates that the desire can be either obliterated by morality or ennobled by beauty, offering two very different routes of development. Given his discussion later in the letters, I argue that Schiller sees many philosophers dealing with the sensuous side by obliterating it in favour of the moral, which this decision will eventually be linked to the major societal and philosophical problems he is observing in the Enlightenment period.

---

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that Kant was also interested in the temporal development of reason out of nature in his 1786 piece *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*, as well as in his lectures (eventually published in 1798) *Anthropologie in Prgramatischer Hinsicht*. In these texts, the idea of our natural and rational sides come into tension with each other, and the goal is to achieve unity of these sides (Kant *Werkausgabe Band XI*). It is unclear, however, if Schiller came across this material during his serious study of Kant before writing the *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*.

Yet when Schiller says that we need to retrace the steps nature took, his comments that follow indicate that we must do something different than merely developing a State of Nature narrative that was so common in the social contract theory tradition. Although the intent of the approach is not dispensed with, the very appeal to the “State of Nature” needs to be more candid than it has in the past, if for no other reason than whatever this narrative should provide, it will nevertheless have no legitimate hold on the trajectory nor the morality of man. Thus:

So holt er, auf eine künstliche Weise, in seiner Volljährigkeit seine Kindheit nach, bildet sich einen Naturstand in der Idee, der ihm zwar durch keine Erfahrung gegeben, aber durch seine Vernunftbestimmung notwendig gesetzt ist, leiht sich in diesem idealischen Stand einen Endzweck, den er in seinem wirklichen Naturstand nicht kannte...” (574)

Although the narrative of the State of Nature is helpful in orienting us towards a goal of social development, Schiller is very clear it is a fiction. Since we never experienced our “natural” past (since we had no clear awareness nor memory of it as we emerged from it), the very act of theorizing about it is merely derived from our current awareness of our rational capacity. Schiller is not the first to characterize the State of Nature narratives as such, which Rousseau even states in the Preface of the *Second Discourse* that the very descriptions of such a state are conditioned by the society that the philosopher finds herself in (132). Yet Schiller does seem to be weary of how this projection into the past sets utopian goals towards the future that actually hinders real progress of developing the self and society.

The danger that Schiller sees in even Rousseau's approach is that it seems to be ready to obliterate the current physical state of man while the moral state that is emerging remains incomplete. By overemphasizing the rational/moral side, traditions have been quick to ignore the physical embodiment of the human. However, this ends up undermining the entire project:

Hebt also die Vernunft den Naturstaat auf, wie sie notwendig muss, wenn sie den ihrigen an die Stelle setzen will, so wagt sie den physischen und wirklichen Menschen an den prolematischen sittlichen, so wagt sie die Existenz der Gesellschaft an ein bloss mögliches (wenn gleich moralisch notwendiges) Ideal von Gesellschaft. Sie nimmt dem Menschen etwas, das er wirklich besitzt, und ohne welches er nichts besitzt, und weist ihn dafür an etwas an, das er besitzen könnte und sollte;... Das grosse Bedenken also ist, dass die physischen Gesellschaft in der Zeit keinen Augenblick aufhören darf, indem die moralische in der Idee sich bildet, dass um der Würde des Menschen willen seine Existenz nicht in Gefahr geraten darf. (575)

Although the drive of reason to the moral state works to destroy the physical state in order to ensure its purity, which is the goal of the deontological ethics developed by people like Kant and Rousseau, this obliteration sacrifices the very existence of the self and society. Just as Hegel later refers to "die Furie" of the French Revolution in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* in "Die Absolute Freiheit und der Schrecken" (389), Schiller is concerned that the very moral imperative of reason risks unleashing violent destruction due to its negating properties if left unchecked. Although some may

interpret Schiller as a full Kantian and fully embracing the moral state,<sup>6</sup> this warning and characterization of the moral side of man provides some sobering discussion to a blind faith in reason. Reason, since it sees the dignity of man transcending his physical state, is itself empty of reality and cannot provide any physicality to the self once it has carried out its destruction of the previous physical state. Once reality has been negated, there is the serious concern of a lack of material for the self to work with.

Thus the ontological existence of the human, and the dynamic of this existence, comes into focus for Schiller in the eleventh letter. He argues that there are two fundamental concepts that we arrive at when we think about the human: that part which endures and that part which constantly changes. He identifies the former *person* (*Person*) and the latter the *condition* (*Zustand*): “Person und Zustand – das Selbst und seine Bestimmungen – die wir uns in dem notwendigen Wesen als Eins und dasselbe denken, sind ewig Zwei in dem endlichen” (601). Both parts, the eternal self and its determinations, are considered to be united, but finite experience will endlessly make them two because of their radical demands made upon the individual from different ends. For the absolute subject (“das absoluten Subjekt”), this unity proceeds from its eternal existence, since the determinations of the self proceed solely from the personality, and thus is a divine being (“Gottheit”). Yet the finite self, placed in a manifold of internal and external forces, will have its Condition, its *Bestimmungen*, partly set by things other than its Person. Although this may seem in itself a miserable form of existence, this state of being unsettled by the outside world is identified by Schiller as the very reason our

---

<sup>6</sup> Examples of such interpretations can be found in Frederick Beiser’s *Schiller as Philosopher*, R.D. Miller’s *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom*, and Laura Anna Macor’s “Die Moralphilosophie des jungen Schiller. Ein ‚Kantianer ante litteram’”.

finite subjectivity comes into being: “Wir sind, weil wir sind; wir empfinden, denken und wollen, weil ausser uns noch etwas anderes ist” (601). Our experience of our feelings, thoughts, and will arise only when we can experience them running up against forces outside of us, allowing the opportunity to distinguish our own self from the world. Although we may get lost in the frustration of our Condition being partly determined by these outside forces, Schiller does assert that it allows us a sense of self that is not possible in the tranquillity of divinity in a pure moral state.

Yet given this ceaseless disruption within the human, neither Person nor Condition can be grounded in each other, and the question remains as to how they are grounded separately. The grounding of the Person becomes freedom, since it is absolute and grounded in itself. Given that it is unchanging, it cannot be reliant upon any other force. The Condition, however, is separated off from the absolute and must be dependent upon something outside of itself, and therefore is identified with contingent being and becoming that is identified as Time. As a result, the totality of the Condition, since it is the succession of all contingent being, is the temporal existence of the human. This temporality then gets grounded back in the Person, “in dem ewig beharrenden ICH” (602) that itself has no beginning in time. The reason Time must be grounded in the absolute subject is that its eternal change can only become perceivable when there is a consistent base to contrast it from. Therefore, the very idea of change requires that there be something that changes that also remains in some part perpetual (601-2).

However, Schiller is careful not to disregard the importance of the Condition as it constructs the self. One must remember that he introduces the Person and the Condition as two aspects of the self, and thus both concepts contribute indispensable parts to one’s

identity. The problem with the absolute subject of the human is that it does not possess the ability to perceive itself, and it is only through the opposing material provided by the contingent being that its existence starts to matter to it:

Die Materie der Tätigkeit also, oder die Realität, welche die höchste Intelligenz aus sich selber schöpft, muss der Mensch erst empfangen, und zwar empfängt er dieselbe als etwas ausser ihm Befindliches im Raume, und als etwas in ihm Wechselndes in der Zeit, auf dem Wege der Wahrnehmung. Diesen in ihm wechselnden Stoff begleitet sein niemals wechselndes Ich – und in allem Wechsel beständig *er* selbst zu bleiben, alle Wahrnehmungen zur Erfahrung, d.h. zur Einheit der Erkenntnis, und jede seiner Erscheinungsarten in der Zeit zum Gesetz für alle Zeiten zu machen, ist die Vorschrift, die durch seine vernünftige Natur ihm gegen ist. Nur indem er sich verändert, existiert er; nur indem er unveränderlich bleibt, existiert er. Der Mensch, vorgestellt in seiner Vollendung, wäre demnach die beharrliche Einheit, die in den Fluten der Veränderung ewig dieselbe bleibt. (602)

This divided nature of the human self is a fundamental point for Schiller's project because how we approach this ontological division has consequences in every other realm of human life. Although this divide has been characterized by numerous philosophers before stretching back to figures like Heraclites and Plato, and thus Schiller does not seem to think he has struck upon anything new here, the manner in which we have set priority of one existence over the other is being questioned in this passage. Human perfection ("Vollendung"), as it is put forward in the last passage, is the equal

embrace of both of these ontological sides, and therefore we must never forget that the recognition of the Condition is equally as important as the recognition of the Person. The French Terror, in all of its ideals of enlightenment and good intention, sought to prioritize the Person over the Condition by wiping clean the Condition of its old power structures, which this zeal turned out disastrous. Moral and political philosophy, in its desire to restore dignity to the Person of the human, quickly devalues the Condition that the human finds herself in as she emerges from nature, not realizing that this part too is important for the self. The rational nature of the self seeks to unify these “Erscheinungsarten”, recognizing that each moment is accompanied by the eternal “I”, but this does not by any means give the Person priority of existence. The necessity of the Person is merely a regulation of reason, and therefore the question remains open as to whether or not the material can be made into a unity beyond the mere demand of this side of our nature. The Person set apart from the Condition is merely empty potential, as Schiller describes it further down in the eleventh letter, and therefore this infinity must sacrifice having any traction in reality to maintain its absolute existence (603). Yet the Condition by itself also relies upon the Person, since without the subsisting “I” that accompanies each “Erscheinungsart”, the material cannot be identified with the self at all. Although we seem to arrive at a deeply divided individual at the ontological level, this sensuous-rational nature contains two important elements that are necessary for the experience of the self, which are matter and form.

From this ontological divide of Person and Condition, Schiller then puts forward two drives that represent the dynamic activities and demands that arise from each. The self has a twofold task: “das Notwendige in uns zur Wirklichkeit zu bringen und das

Wirkliche ausser uns dem Gesetz der Notwendigkeit zu unterwerfen” (604). The human is prompted by two different forces that are identified as the sensuous drive and the formal drive. The sensuous drive arises from the physical existence of the human, taking within the boundaries of temporality and provides matter to determine itself. Matter, for Schiller, is nothing other than change, or “Realität, die die Zeit erfüllt” (604), and the sensuous drive is only able to understand matter, and therefore sensation is merely content occupying time. The formal drive arises from the human’s absolute character of Person, and insists on this eternal quality while bringing harmony to the material manifestations of the self. This harmony thus finds the Person within the diversity of its Condition, and provides the laws of judgements and will to pursue truth in knowledge and right in action (605). The formal drive, given its ability to see past constant change to the laws that provide consistency, allow the human to unify ideas and to see the realm of phenomena and temporality as being within itself rather than being submerged in time. With this insight, the human then escapes the isolation of being a mere individual and can see itself as part of a larger class of existence, moving action from the seeking of self-interest to a desire for justice (606).

Given how these drives are characterized, Schiller recognizes that on the surface there appears to be a major conflict within human psychology that seems irresolvable. Yet both drives play an integral part in constituting the ontological existence of the self, and Schiller sees it being necessary that they become mediated. However, it is not as though the situation is as hopeless as it may first appear. We may walk away from the twelfth letter with the impression that these drives work against each other due to their inherent dispositions, but Schiller then reminds us that this is not the case unavoidably.

The two drives do seek opposing ends, where the sensuous drive demands change while the formal drive demands constancy. Yet it is better to characterize these drives as never making contact, since they both seek different things within their own domains (607). Schiller wants to recognize the importance of both drives as they constitute the self, and he introduces both while acknowledging that each has a serious deficiency. Being rooted in the temporality and determinations of the self, the sensuous drive is necessary in order to provide content. Without matter, which as constant change is also the opportunity to transform, the Person itself would never have any opportunity to determine itself and experience becoming. However, the sensuous drive is also trapped in the present moment, seeing only what is before it. This narrow-minded focus on matter, and therefore constant change, thus makes it blind to the various possibilities within the moment (since it cannot link one particular moment to another), which the continuity of the Person is able to bring out because it remains constant from moment to moment. Thus the content of matter, given that it enables becoming, provides the potentiality of the Person, yet the sensuous drive by itself is incapable of doing much with that potential. On the flip side, the formal drive is unable to manifest the self because it is merely empty potential. It is acknowledged that the formal drive contains the infinite possibilities of the self and provides the consistency of the Person to make it stable, yet that infinity becomes ineffective if it never touches upon matter. The formal drive is unable to provide matter for itself, and therefore must look to the sensuous drive and the Condition it determines for content to work with. In an interesting twist, we see a dependency between these two drives arise where there first appeared to be opposition, where both

drives need each other in order for the self to be realized and to function in its split ontological existence.

Yet in discovering that both drives are dependent upon each other, Schiller has the additional task of explaining why domination of one drive over the other is detrimental, although not necessarily impossible. He must argue why art is a crucial component for the education of the self, both politically and morally, and he does this by positing a third drive that can bring the two other drives together. Yet the necessity of this drive needs to be established. As was brought up in the third letter, we recognize that humanity has emerged from nature, and thus he asserts the fact that our current moral and social arrangement emerged due to physical necessity rather than from moral dignity. One response from moral philosophy has been to annihilate this “natural state” in order to replace it with the moral state, which Schiller himself earlier responded that the physical animal component of humanity must still exist as we work to bring the moral state into existence. By the twelfth letter, Schiller has provided an argument for why annihilating the physical side of humanity is problematic, since he reveals the interdependence of these two parts of the self. Yet Schiller must still anticipate the possible response that it seems that the natural development is for one drive to dominate the other, whether one decides that the sensuous drive or the formal drive should take priority. This move would seem to get rid of the need of the third drive altogether by bringing the unity of the self through this model of domination or reduction, as well as explain why people do function as a self in our current society without Schiller’s solution. Although Schiller does not deny that people can function in this domination model, he points out that it is also the reason why alienation is prevalent in modern society, since one drive is not properly

recognized in the self. Yet he also points out that given the focus and lack of each, the domination of one drive over another is potentially disastrous, even if we find that it is possible to function in human experience. Both drives, given that they have a singular purpose, become myopic and egoistical in its own domain, and thus needs the other to balance it out. In maintaining a strongly divided nature that is in harmony with itself, Schiller thinks that such egoism is thus possible to escape.

For the formal drive, Schiller warns that the overemphasis of rationality in modernity has made it less evident as to how pernicious it can be when reason dominates over the sensuous. Also, due to the nature of transcendental philosophy as we see it executed by Kant, we can also forget the one-sidedness of the critical philosophy that arises from German Idealism. Schiller is at times cautious with the analytic method of Kant in that we must remind ourselves that the transcendental analytic, the very attempt to divide ourselves into faculties or drives, is a result of the faculty of reason critiquing itself. The division is artificial, and may deceive us into thinking that the two functions necessarily conflict. Due to the fact that the critique is carried out by reason itself, the result most likely will favour the rational and see the material as alienating. In a note in the thirteenth letter, Schiller states:

In einer Transcedental-Philosophie, wo alles darauf ankommt, die Form von dem Inhalt zu befreien und das Notwendige von allem Zufälligen rein zu erhalten, gewöhnt man sich gar leicht, das Materielle sich bloss als Hindernis zu denken und die Sinnlichkeit, weil sie gerade bei *diesem* Geschäft im Wege steht, in einem notwendigen Widerspruch mit der Vernunft vorzustellen. Eine solche Vorstellungsart liegt zwar auf keine

Weise im Geiste des Kantischen Systems, aber im Buchstaben desselben  
könnte sie gar wohl leigen. (607-8n)

Schiller does not dismiss the contributions of transcendental philosophy, which he himself relies on a number of insights from Kant's critical project. Yet if we forget the context of Kant's project of reason critiquing itself, we fall into the danger of absolutizing that project and neglecting other important facets of human life. As such, one is never able to escape from the empty subjectivity of the Person, leaving out the objectivity of the Condition that is needed to complete the self. Schiller seems to be arguing, and I don't think he is being facetious here, that although Kant's writing may literally be interpreted in this subjective matter, the actual spirit or intention of the system does not aim to trap us in this subjectivity.

In addition, the formal drive seeks to impose its necessity on matter, and Schiller's characterization of this drive on the surface makes rationality seem overly aggressive when left in the dominant position. As was noted earlier, in order to raise humanity to its moral dignity, it can have a disposition to see materiality as an obstacle to be eradicated rather than a counterpart to be worked with. Given the predisposition to favor with the formal drive in philosophy, a predisposition that stretches all the way to Plato's description of the "well-ordered soul", Schiller does provide in the thirteenth letter a lengthy note concerning the detriment to knowledge and love when rationality is put in the dominant position. In both cases, the emptiness of the formal drive, and by extension the Person, inhibits us of ever realizing the state we are pursuing because its aggressive imposition pushes out the matter we need to receive from the Condition. Although the formal drive is needed in such situations for the self due its ability to move

between moments of the Condition and matter it provides, its power only gains traction when the form is integrated with matter. In the case of knowledge, there is generally a concern in this period among German intellectuals about how the human consciousness needs to be structured to acquire knowledge in the natural sciences. Obviously the person who initiated these discussions in German circles was Kant, but as Angus Nicholls notes in “The Scientific Unconscious: Goethe’s post-Kantian Epistemology”, the question was also of concern to Goethe and Schiller. This concern about the proper consciousness for acquiring natural scientific knowledge seems to be of concern when he brings up the aggressive nature of the formal drive. He states:

Eine der vornehmsten Ursachen, warum unsre Naturwissenschaften so langsame Schritte machen, ist offenbar der allgemeine und kaum bezwingbare Hang zu teleologischen Urteilen, bei denen sich, sobald sie konstitutiv gebraucht werden, das bestimmende Vermögen dem empfangenden unterschiebt... Dieses voreilige Streben nach Harmonie, ehe man die einzelnen Laute beisammen hat, die sie ausmachen sollen, diese gewalttätige Usurpation der Denkkraft in einem Gebiete, wo sie nicht unbedingt zu gebieten hat, ist der Grund der Unfruchtbarkeit so vieler denkenden Köpfe für das Beste der Wissenschaft, und es ist schwer zu sagen, ob die Vernunft, welche keinen Inhalt abwartet, der Erweiterung unserer Kenntnisse mehr geschadet haben. (609n-610n)

Schiller takes up Kant’s position that teleological judgment should be used in a regulative manner rather than constitutively in the pursuit of knowledge of the natural world, which

knowledge is defined by Schiller as containing two elements: reality and necessity.<sup>7</sup>

Although the formal drive demands necessity from reality, this demand does not imply that the necessity actually exists in reality. If this demand for necessity takes priority over what reality provides through the sensuous drive, it ends up pushing out the material content and leaves us with a vacuous necessity that arises merely from the Person. The formal drive is capable of providing very elaborate judgments concerning how nature operates from its own imagination that are infinite and also rationally coherent, but these judgments never gain traction as knowledge if they are prejudgments that filter out those parts of reality that don't fit with it. One might think of the resilience of Ptolemaic theory as a good historical example of this situation, where the increasing amount of empirical anomalies were dealt with either by being ignored or by providing increasingly complex and problematic explanations to hold the Earth at the center of the universe. Even in the case of knowledge, which often is assumed to be the domain of rationality, Schiller wants to point out that the formal drive has to share this domain with the sensuous drive, and that its active role must be tempered by the passive role of its counterpart.

Another realm where the domination of the formal drive over the sensuous is insufficient and dangerous is in the practice of philanthropy, which is rather more pressing given the political dimensions of Schiller's project. Schiller believes that there are two ways that our love or care for another human being can be hindered: "die Heftigkeit unsrer Begirden oder durch die Rigidität unsrer Grundsätze – mehr durch den Egoism unsrer Sinne order durch den Egoism unsrer Vernunft gestört und erkältet wird"

---

<sup>7</sup> This definition of knowledge is derived from his statement in the fifteenth letter that in concerning the demands of the sensuous and formal drives, "weil der eine sich, beim Erkennen, auf die Wirklichkeit, der andre auf die Notwendigkeit der Dinge bezieht" (616).

(610n). In the fourteenth letter, Schiller provides us with the two elements that are needed when we say we love another human being: they must engage our affection through the sensuous drive and earn our esteem through our formal drive (613). Although the precepts formed by character are important when we find someone worthy of our love, the receptive feeling of affection must also be present. Otherwise, the other person is always kept at a distance and distrusted: “Wie können wir, bei noch so lobenswürdigen Maximen, billig, gütig und menschlich gegen andere sein, wenn uns das Vermögen fehlt, fremde Natur treu und wahr in uns aufzunehmen, fremde Situationen uns anzueignen, fremde Gefühl zu den unsrigen zu machen?” (610n). Mere esteem is not love because it does not take in the individuality of the person, but rather we only see the form that we impose upon the person. Just as we never gain knowledge if we are satisfied with the vacuous form of necessity, so we lack a full embrace of the individual when we don’t feel the particular conditions that make up that individual. Schiller further notes that in terms of our discussion of “character formation”, historically it has entailed cultivating an indifference to emotions in the favor of principle, since many philosophers have noted the difficulty of maintaining principle when stirred by emotions. Yet this preference to do away with emotions is a testament to the weakness of character rather than its strength: “denn freilich ist es unendlich leichter, vor einem entwaffneten Gegner Ruhe zu haben, als einen mutigen und rüstigen Feind zu beherrschen” (611n). Due to the fragility of the rational ego in its ability to work with reality, emotion, and the other, “developing character” often takes the easier route of dominating these elements of life rather than learning how to work with them. Although it is important to hold to principle, the lack of feeling can possibly lead to a cold and condescending character that is

unsympathetic to the individuals it comes across. Thus, in its sterile form, morality is incapable of solving any political issues of bringing humans together into a community.

This concern about love and the ability to take in others is of concern to Schiller already in his essay “Über die tragische Kunst” published in 1792. The question of the essay focuses on why we are drawn to tragedy as a genre while also naturally being repulsed by the sight of suffering. Human emotions seem to create puzzling divisions in people as we observe their behavior, since the sight of distress and danger evokes mixed impulses:

Es ist eine allgemeine Erscheinung in unsrer Natur, daß uns das Traurige, das Schreckliche, das Schauerhafte selbst mit unwiderstehlichem Zauber an sich lockt, daß wir uns von Auftritten des Jammers, des Entsetzens mit gleichen Kräften weggestoßen und wieder angezogen fühlen. Alles drängt sich voll Erwartung um den Erzähler einer Mordgeschichte; das abenteuerlichste Gespenstermärchen verschlingen wir mit Begierde, und mit desto größerer, je mehr uns dabei die Haare zu Berge steigen. (372)

Tragedy, a genre that is centered on the suffering of its characters, is potentially a morally dubious aesthetic if the pleasure it evokes in its audience is merely that we enjoy seeing others suffer. It also raises doubts about the moral integrity of the culture that indulges in such an aesthetic practice, particularly Greek and Shakespearean theatre. Yet Schiller argues that theatrical tragedy evokes and cultivates in its audience a rather complex consciousness that is not simply based on a pleasure of seeing suffering, and it in fact captivates us because it displays a very human experience that we are able to relate to. An important element of tragedy is that it makes the audience face a moment that is

sublime, a topic that Schiller was captivated by before and during the writing the *Ästhetische Briefe* in essays such as “Vom Erhabenen” (1793), “Über das Pathetische” (1793), “Über Anmut und Würde” (1793), and “Über das Erhabene”.<sup>8</sup> Although the *Ästhetische Briefe* have a particular focus on bringing harmony to the different aspects of humanity, these essays are more focused on the rupture that occurs to bring about this internal division. It is in tragedy where we starkly see the two sides of the self come into conflict with each other, where the inclination generated by one’s finite circumstances become opposed to the duty generated by the infinite moral person. As with his other essays that treat the sublime in the wake of Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, it is this rupturing into our two sides that holds us in awe, since we can then see into ourselves the infinite possibility beyond the finite moment.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, one of the functions of tragedy

---

<sup>8</sup> Although this last essay did not officially appear until 1801, editors of the National Edition believe that the use of Kantian terminology and agreement with the previous essays listed dates it between 1794 to 1796, just as the *Ästhetische Briefen* were being written and published.

<sup>9</sup> The sublime, as opposed to beauty, seems to be the major catalyst in the rupture. The understanding (*der Verstand*) is only capable of grasping the physical and sensuous world, yet reason (*die Vernunft*) transcends this order and occupies a completely different one. Thus as the human emerges from nature, there must be an experience that discomforts her in such a way that the sensuous no longer holds her. Beauty itself cannot do this, since it often captivates our attention on the physical before we can get a glimpse of the moral state (799). Thus, the experience of the sublime is what allows this rupture to happen and to make the human an interstice of both the physical and the moral, specifically because it disturbs us just enough to make us question our relationship to the physical order. He states in *Vom Erhabenen* that a sublime object “gibt uns *erstlich*: als Naturwesen unsre Abhängigkeit zu empfinden, indem er uns *zweitens*: mit der Unabhängigkeit bekannt macht, die wir als Vernunftwesen über die Natur sowohl *in* uns als *außer* uns, behaupt” (489). In that single moment we feel our participation in both the physical order that limits us through dependence and the moral order that brings about our rational independence that allows us to see this dependency as contingent, and the result is a much more complex psychological structure because it disturbs our natural complacency. Although the very experience of the sublime makes us aware that we can be violently forced to do what we do not want to do, it is this awareness of the violence

is to make us aware of the disparate forces within us, which the strong urge to act out of duty is frustrated by the material circumstances that we find ourselves in. The stronger reality resists our will to act, which is particularly strong in scenarios of tragedy where the situation cannot be overcome through principle without suffering, the more “real” our Person feels due to this failure to fulfill the morally correct action.

In creating this rupture, Schiller argues that the ability to empathize with fellow human beings is possible, and thus our draw to the suffering of others is actually out of the diminishing of the sensuous ego rather than a sense of pleasure of seeing pain. Given that we initially emerge from nature, our sensuous nature is rather strong and ego-centered, and the emptiness of our formal side can leave it in a weak position. Without the experience of the sublime, we can go along the currents of our sensuous nature without much disturbance: “Der rohe Sohn der Natur, den kein Gefühl zarter Menschlichkeit zügelt, überläßt sich ohne Scheu diesem mächtigen Zuge” (373). Only when we feel a struggle between these two forces is there a leap into self-consciousness that also develops an awareness of others.<sup>10</sup> In “Vom Erhabenen”, Schiller discusses the experience of the sublime as a moment of insight, where that very resistance of reality makes us feel independent of our temporality because we become aware of our formal being: “Zum Gefühl des Erhabenen wird also schlechterdings erfordert, daß wir uns von jedem *physischen Widerstehungsmittel* völlig verlassen sehen und in unserm nichtphysischen Selbst dagegen Hülfe suchen” (495). For Schiller, the moment of the

---

that allows us to introspectively look at what remains after this violent act has subjugated us.

<sup>10</sup> Maria del Rosario Acosta López provides a relevant account of the sublime in her essay “‘Making Other People’s Feelings Our Own’: From the Aesthetic to the Political in Schiller’s *Aesthetic Letters*”, where her interpretation argues that the sublime has an important political role in instilling empathy in people.

sublime is important for human consciousness because it mirrors back to us our internally differentiated nature, breaking the snare of the senses. It is only this moment where one is completely stopped by nature that the feeling of Personhood, the feeling of an active and enduring self, registers. Yet in “Über die tragische Kunst”, Schiller argues that this feeling of the sublime that brings about this awakening and rupture, and thus diminish the ego of the sensuous, cannot be felt at a distance in a place of safety (372). The relationship between the characters of tragedy and their audience must be such that the audience takes in the particular suffering that takes place, as opposed to an intellectual participation in the events of the play. The tragedy must tug at our very desire to act through our moral distance as an audience, while we are also feeling the suffering due to the circumstances that shape the difficult decisions of tragic plots. If this active participation in the suffering of the character was not important, we would not have to portray it through performance as we do: “Ungleich starker affizieren uns Leiden, von denen wir Zeugen sind, als solche, die wir erst durch Erzählung oder Beschreibung erfahren.” (383). Although Plato argued that the best form of poetry is one of narration rather than the mimetic performance of acting (Plato 392d-397a), Schiller responds that narration lacks the proper interface with suffering for us to cultivate empathy between human beings. If we want to develop a culture where people are not cold towards one another, they must gain the ability to empathize with the particular instances of suffering as though that suffering was their own (rather than forcing these instances to fit our instances of suffering). Lacking this imagination, we often fail to grasp the particularity of other individuals when they don’t resemble our life experiences, and such a lack of

openness is detrimental to political communities that aim at harmony rather than conformity.

Although Schiller provides a substantial warning about the dangers of the formal drive dominating the sensuous drive, he also sees problems with the sensuous drive dominating over the formal drive. Although some have taken a romantic interpretation of Schiller's warnings of the formal drive, and thus put an overemphasis on the sensuous drive, I want to stress that Schiller is seeking a harmony between these two drives. Given that Schiller emphasizes that humanity emerged from nature and is in the process of finding this harmony, he does posit a phase where the sensuous drive is dominant as the formal drive develops to the point it can awaken us from the sensuous slumber. Thus, he states early on in the second letter the imbalance we find ourselves in: "Jetzt aber herrscht das Bedürfnis und beugt die gesunkene Menschheit unter sein tyrannisches Joch. Der *Nutzen* ist das grosse Idol der Zeit, dem alle Kräfte fronen und alle Talente huldigen sollen" (572). "Nutzen", although meaning "usefulness", can also be translated as "utility" in an economic sense, and the context of the passage suggests an emphasis on contemporary material practice of markets. Those who interpret Schiller more in line as a strict Kantian may be influenced by this type of language, but it must be noted that Schiller is talking about an extreme imbalance where the sensuous drive is tyrannical and myopic, and does not state that the sensuous drive must be dominated because of this condition. Nonetheless, the colourful language of domination and tyranny of this condition emerging from nature is striking because it describes the mood of alienation present in the current economic system that distances us from our moral dignity.

It may be easy to see the dangers of being a “blind” animal with reason either completely or mostly absent, however those who are in line with Hume may be able to respond that it does not support the conclusion that the formal should not serve the sensuous. Schiller responds that such a state is being under the dominion of nature, and humanity would remain in an unequal relationship within itself because our natural part is not able to realize the dignity of our moral part. Without this shift away from the domination of nature, many of the romantic ideals of freedom and sense of self lose their definition, which he describes such individuals in the twenty-fourth letter as “Ewig einförmig in seinen Zwecken, ewig wechselnd in seinen Urteilen, selbstsüchtig, ohne Er selbst zu sein, ungebunden, ohne frei zu sein, Sklave, ohne einer Regel zu dienen” (646). Although one may imagine life in some ideal state of nature as free, the very lack of ground provided by an order (“Regel”) that is provided by the formal drive makes one less free because it is at the whim of the unconscious forces of nature. Although on the surface this may appear as paradoxical, much like Rousseau’s formulation in *The Social Contract* “being forced to be free” (53), Schiller’s understanding of the self is such that the self only gains reality from the matter provided by the sensuous drive, but that matter does not make up a self without being strung together by the stability of form. The benefit of the formal drive, even though it is vacuous, is that it comes from the unity of the Person, while actions of nature are aimless and without teleology. As was noted earlier, the formal drive also allows potential to be seen within the moments provided in the Condition, allowing us to break out of the current moment that is the myopic focus of the sensuous drive. Although the formal drive can provide short term consciousness of actions and desires while in service of sensuous drive, Schiller argues that a self cannot

emerge until the formal drive, in its own domain, can make a totality of sensuous experience. Thus any arrangement where the formal drive, i.e. human rationality, is not raised to its own dignity, the sensuous side of the self that is embraced by the romantics cannot even exist.

Another aspect that troubles Schiller about the domination of the formal drive to the sensuous is that it too prevents the individual to love other human beings. As was noted earlier, love for Schiller is a combination of affection and esteem. Just as the coldness the formal drive can inhibit affection, and preventing us from taking in the particularity needed to love a person, the lack of self in the sensuous drive prevents one from having esteem for another. Esteem is the recognition of the moral dignity that exists within all Persons, seeing someone as a value or end in itself that exists in the eternal, rather than a moment in the temporal whirlwind that is introduced in the senses. Thus, Schiller describes a human being that resembles much like Hobbes' human being in the state of nature that is ruled by sensuous egoism:

Mit *seiner* Menschenwürde unbekannt, ist er weit entfernt, sie in andern zu ehren, und der eignen wilden Gier sich bewusst, fürchtet er sie in jedem Geschöpf, das ihm ähnlich sieht. Nie erblickt er andre in sich, nur sich in andern, und die Gesellschaft, anstatt ihn zur Gattung auszudehnen, schliesst ihn nur enger und enger in sein Individuum ein. (647)

Schiller is pointing out that the sensuous egoism that he is wary of is an actual structuring of one's consciousness, where the inability to recognize the dignity of others is directly tied to the inability to set oneself apart from the matter received from nature. This psychological egoism therefore is not something that can be morally condemned (since it

by its very structure exists outside the moral state and cannot perceive moral value), but it descriptively denies those who wish to have a sense of self if they embrace this psychological history as a justification of ethical egoism.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, we may have a sensual affection for an individual, but we cannot love her/him if we are unable to see the totality that grants the person esteem.<sup>12</sup>

In looking at both scenarios of subjugation, we see rooted in either dynamic Schiller's concerns with any model of the self that is premised on domination. Both forms of domination end up developing its own egoism, whether it be "durch den Egoism unsrer Sinne oder durch den Egoism unsrer Vernunft" (610n). Such domination, according to Schiller, is merely the perpetuation of our alienation, since "Daraus aber kann bloss Einförmigkeit, aber keine Harmonie entstehen" and it never heals the divide between our two aspects of being (607n). If the sensuous drive dominates over the formal or the formal drive dominates over the sensuous, "In dem ersten Fall wird er nie *er selbst*, in dem zweiten wird er nie *etwas anders* sein; mithin eben darum in beiden Fällen *keines von beiden*, folglich – Null sein" (609). Thus, appealing to models of the self that rely on the domination of one part over the whole, although certainly possible, will never allow us to realize political freedom because we remain alienated within our own being.

In my reading of Schiller, the analytic division of the self into two different drives produces the problem of alienation because we tend to side with one drive over the other,

---

<sup>11</sup> It is also important to note that Schiller does not believe that this extreme state of "roher Natur" as he describes it exists in reality, but rather is an ideal to aid our conceptualization of human nature (647). This suggests that Schiller is thinking of humans more so on a spectrum, where the pure physical state and the pure moral state are the two extreme ends.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the self and love, we would be able to deduce from Schiller's discussion that knowledge is also not possible in such an imbalance, since knowledge must have truth from the formal drive along with reality.

and thus we lose the absolute being of the self. The sensuous drive recognizes the passive side of us that forms due to physical necessity, where we are determined by previous conditions and are forced to respond to the circumstances that we have no choice over. The formal drive recognizes the active side of us that forms due to moral necessity, and seeks to determine the self from the personality, regardless of particular circumstances we find ourselves in. When we prioritize one drive over the other, the demands of the drive we subordinate are then seen as constraints against the necessity of the drive we have sided with, and such constraints are seen as contingent (not necessary to our being). Yet either way, we are left alienated and partially out of control of our identity, since the analytic division will always debase part of our ontological existence.

Yet the tendency in philosophy is often to establish a subordinated relationship within the self to the other, whether through reductionism or hierarchy. Plato's *Republic* serves as a well-known illustration of this, where the virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice have in their very structure the recognition of a hierarchy. Wisdom is present within the city when the guardians, that part that possesses the proper knowledge of the good, rule over the rest (Plato 428e), while courage is present when the auxiliaries properly preserve the cultural practices and beliefs of the city (429c-430b). Given the isomorphism proposed by Plato, when we replace within this structure the guardians with the rational part of the soul, and the guardians with the spirited part of the soul, wisdom and courage are then present in the soul as a whole. Temperance is a virtue that depicts specifically the hierarchy that is to be preserved when wisdom is present:

And seen from here, it is more like a sort of concord and harmony than the previous ones... Temperance is surely a sort of order, the mastery of

certain sorts of pleasures and appetites. People indicate as much when they use the term ‘self-mastery’ – though I do not know in what way... It seems to me, however, that what this term [self-mastery] is trying to indicate is that within the same person’s soul, there is a better thing and a worse one. Whenever the naturally better one masters the worse, this is called being master of oneself. (430e-431b)

Plato affirms that temperance is a harmony within the city or soul, but the harmony that he puts forward is structured by the subjugation of one part to the other rather than the parts working together. Finally, justice is qualified as “doing one’s own work and not meddling with what is not one’s own” (433a), which he argues is the virtue that makes the other three even possible since the practice of each part staying in its domain preserves the order that allows the rational part to rule. As Charles Taylor states about Plato’s model in *Sources of the Self*, “We are good when reason rules, and bad when we are dominated by our desires” (115). The model assumes that one part of the self must be privileged over the rest,<sup>13</sup> and therefore it is better that rationality is master over emotion and appetites because it knows “better” what actions to take in preserving the whole. This pattern of privileging one part over the rest is deeply embedded in Western philosophy, and it becomes even more entrenched when Descartes’ *Cogito* ties the certainty of the self to conscious thought with the formulation, “I think, therefore I am”.

Thus I read Schiller as highlighting a very important concern about how Western thought has historically approached the self given that it tends to follow this pattern. In

---

<sup>13</sup> If we look at the other four possible structures of the city/soul model (timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny), the fundamental quality of each model is about what part rules over the rest as well.

stating that “daraus aber kann bloss Einförmigkeit, aber keine Harmonie entstehen” (607n), Schiller’s account questions Plato’s characterization of temperance as a harmony, and by extension challenges his concept of justice. Although Plato characterizes justice as not meddling in the work of others, the fact that the harmony put forward by Plato requires that the rational part rule over the rest implies that it must meddle in the affairs of others. If we try to keep Plato’s concept of justice in place consistently, and this component for Plato is the root for the other three virtues, then we must find a true harmony that does not involve the subjugation of one part to the other and each is recognized with its domain to contribute to the whole. By extension into the social and political realm, Schiller is also wary of the extreme specialization that requires the individual to sacrifice their personal balance in order to further the economic progress of the whole community.<sup>14</sup> In order to do this, Schiller posits that there must be a third drive, the play drive, which allows this harmony to take place.

Since we require reciprocal action between the two drives, where each can operate within its own domain without hindering the other, the play drive is put forward in the fourteenth letter as a sublation of the tension posited in the analytic of transcendental philosophy. We experience ourselves divided between the sensuous finite time and the formal infinite eternal, yet experience indicates that we also are existing persons. Since each drive by itself is insufficient to bring about action, the ontological division of human experience still implies that the drives work together in some manner. Yet in order to realize the absolute being of the individual as closely as possible, the goal is to be both conscious of one’s freedom through one’s rationality while being sensible of

---

<sup>14</sup> We will return to this concern further down when I discuss the importance of the organic political state in Schiller.

one's existence in reality (612), without one side being seen as a threat to the other. Until we have play, the self has set itself up against the world, where self-awareness is realized when reality resists the aggression of our rational will. Yet such a divided state is ineffective for action, which for Schiller involves both preservation of life and maintaining dignity of the Person (616). Thus, "der Spieltrieb also würde dahin gerichtet sein, die Zeit in der Zeit aufzuheben, Werden mit absolutem Sein, Veränderung mit Identität zu vereinbaren" (612-3). This sublation ("aufheben") of time within time, bringing consistency within change, opens up the possibility of the formal drive to work within the temporal content of the sensuous drive, allowing the Person to exist within time rather than to be excluded from it.

Another important aspect of the play drive is that it puts in place the constraints set by each drive while eliminating contingency that is created when we subjugate one drive to the other. As was noted before, each drive brings with it a particular constraint upon the psyche ("das Gemüt"), whether it is the physical necessity of existence and feeling or the moral necessity of dignity. When both are taken earnestly at the same time, as they are under the play drive, this tension dissolves because we fully identify with both:

Diesen Namen rechtfertigt der Sprachgebrauch vollkommen, der alles das, was weder subjectiv noch objectiv zufällig ist und doch weder äusserlich noch innerlich nötig, mit dem Wort Spiel zu bezeichnen pflegt. Da sich das Gemüt bei Anschauung des Schönen in einer glücklichen Mitte zwischen dem Gestz und Bedürfnis befindet, so ist es eben darum, weil es

sich zwischen beiden teilt, dem Zwange sowohl des einen als des andern entzogen. (615-6)

In the play drive's act of sublating time within time, the formal law exists within the realm of physical exigency rather than outside of it. Since the play drive takes both sets of necessity as it pursues its object of harmony, the contingency that arose when one drive was subjected to the other disappears. The self is taken as both being its Condition and Person, and by identifying with both ontological aspects, neither is seen as a contingency or constraint. The very structures that are brought to us by the physical state and the moral state are then used to contribute to a feeling of self rather than an alienation of self. It is in these moments of harmony that we experience beauty, which is the ultimate object of the play drive because beauty is the result of harmony.

Schiller argues that given that the division between the sensuous drive and the formal drive were merely transcendental, the sublation of these two drives into the play drive isn't something that we can explain except with the fact that we see an important shift in viewpoint. The self ontologically always consisted of the two functions that were represented by the two drives, but the positing of the play drive allows us to recognize that both functions can exist in the same entity without inevitable conflict. Conceptually, this is the ground and we cannot probe further:

Dadurch aber, dass wir die Bestandteile anzugeben wissen, die in ihrer Vereinigung die Schönheit hervorbringen, ist die Genesis derselben auf keine Weise noch erklärt; denn dazu würde erfordert, dass man jene Vereinigung selbst begriff, die uns, wie überhaupt alle Wechselwirkung zwischen dem Endlichen und Unendlichen, unerforschlich bleibt. Die

Vernunft stellt aus transzendentalen Gründen die Forderung auf: es soll eine Gemeinschaft zwischen Formtrieb und Stofftrieb, das heisst, ein Spieltrieb sein, weil nur die Einheit mit der Form, der Zufälligkeit mit der Notwendigkeit, des Leidens mit der Freiheit den Begriff der Menschheit vollendet. Sie muss diese Forderung aufstellen, weil sie Vernunft ist – weil sie ihrem Wesen nach auf Vollendung und auf Wegräumung aller Schranken dringt, jede ausschliessende Tätigkeit des einen oder des andern Triebes aber die menschliche Natur unvollendet lässt und eine Schranke in derselben begründet. (615)

Reason, out of its very essence, demands that there is unification between the two drives, and the unity of these two seemingly opposing drives allows the realization of humanity. From Schiller's understanding of transcendental philosophy, the very division of the mind into faculties or drives made by reason during the transcendental analytic is merely a superficial divide, necessary in order for reason to understand the elements that move the mind. If we try to push the division deeper and base it in reality, we artificially splinter the individual, especially when we prioritize one element over the other. Thus the tool for understanding human experience becomes a distorting lens if we assert it too far in critical philosophy. The fragmentation of humanity exists because we have been dissected by our own hands, and no manner of reduction, mechanical addition, or subjugation will make us whole again.

Besides this impasse of providing a deeper understanding to the unity provided by the play drive, another important point that emerges from this passage is that although reason provides the demand for harmony, it does not answer the question of whether it

really does provide this harmony. As Kant points out in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, it is possible that Reason overreaches in its demands and falls into error and contradiction, such as is demonstrated in the antinomies. Schiller is aware of this concern, and addresses it in the sixteenth letter that the perfect equilibrium of the two drives is merely an ideal, and is never realized in actuality (619). However, we do experience beauty in actuality, even if the harmony experienced does not perfectly realize the ideal balance between reality and form. Therefore we experience beauty in two ways, since beauty is able to bring our imbalanced state temporarily into harmony through different experiences. To bring about harmony, beauty must have a releasing and tensing effect: a releasing effect in order to ensure that the drives do not infringe upon each other and a tensing effect to make sure that both are working at equal capacity. These are identified by Schiller as “melting beauty” (“schmelzende Schönheit”) and “energizing beauty” (“energische Schönheit”) (619-620). In the seventeenth letter, he explains that at times when the drives are over tensed and intrude upon each other, melting beauty is needed, while energizing beauty is needed when the drives are too relaxed and are not operating at full capacity. Given that Schiller’s education and training was in medicine and its philosophy, he was educated with various theories of the body that were based in humorism, where health is defined by the equilibrium of the components of the body (Dewhurst 90, 104). Yet under the influence of theorists like Georg Ernst Stahl (1659-1734) and Johann Gottfried Brendel (1712-58), who argued for a shift in medicine to include more significantly psychology and neuro-physiology, Schiller seems to take his physiological training and apply it to his philosophical anthropology and aesthetics. The health of the body in humorism is always an ideal, since the state of the body is always in

flux. This does not mean that the body never experiences the state of “health”, since some states are more in equilibrium than others. It also doesn’t privilege one element over the others in a hierarchy, although it is understood that imbalances will necessitate a particular bodily fluid to restore balance. Even play is realized in actuality in an imbalanced state, which he states in the fifteenth letter that what we refer to as play in actual life are directed towards our material life given that modernity is under the yoke of economic utility (617). This, however, does not exclude ideal forms of play, which in turn would realize ideal beauty. Therefore I don’t read Schiller as trying to redefine “play” to embrace ideal beauty while debasing material beauty, but rather trying to expand the reference of play while narrowing its qualities down to the essence of harmony of the drives. Given Schiller’s famous line “*der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und er ist nur da ganze Mensch wo er spielt*” (618), “play” as an activity must include a lot more human activity than what we often think of when the word is evoked (e.g. children’s games, sports, gambling, role-playing), but would include other structures that we deem essential to humanity in the modern era (e.g. art, philosophy, politics, history).

This shift in how play is defined is important, since Schiller is aware that his use of the word ‘play’ may overshadow the importance of the dynamic he is trying to bring to light. Given that play is often relegated to children and adult recreation, his investment of human essence into such a marginalized activity would seem to be problematic. Yet he tries to invert this perception for the reader: “*Was Sie, nach Ihrer Vorstellung der Sache, Einschränkung nennen, das nenne ich, nach der meinen, die ich durch Beweise gerechtfertigt habe, Erweiterung*” (617). Instead of seeing this move as a limitation to

beauty, and by extension humanity, Schiller sees it as an expansion for these concepts, since the human being is taken in her totality. Since no side is favoured, no part of the self needs to be alienated at the expense of another part that is prioritized. Therefore, instead of beauty merely being a site that chooses between the sensuous or the formal, or the subjective or the objective,<sup>15</sup> Schiller wants to unlock beauty through play as being the site that employs both sides of our divided existence. Therefore, he describes the realization of this harmony of drives, distinct from the physical and moral states, as the aesthetic state.

The aesthetic state is the middle state that beauty moves us into, and Schiller defines it as a balance between the physical state and the moral state. More importantly, it is the result when we sublimate the tension between form and sense, and where the two drives are dissolved and taken up into the play drive. At the beginning of the eighteenth letter, Schiller argues that although reason demands that form and sense be united, our experience makes us conceive of them as divided. We find ourselves in a bind, and it seems impossible to find a middle state between the physical and moral state. To bring unity, he argues that we must first rigorously understand the division between the two drives and their separateness. Without such a clear understanding, we end up merely a confusion of the two functions rather than a unity. Yet we must then carry out a second step: “Weil aber beide Zustände einander ewig entgegengesetzt bleiben, so sind sie nicht anders zu verbinden, als indem sie aufgehoben werden” (625). To unite the two within

---

<sup>15</sup> In the *Kallias Briefe*, Schiller establishes four ways trying to account for the beautiful, which are the subjective sensual, subjective rational, rational objective and sensuous objective. At the time of the *Kallias Briefe*, Schiller attempted to establish an account through the sensuous objective, although it is unclear how much he remained under this view in the *Ästhetische Briefe* (Schiller 394).

the human individual, it is not enough to amalgamate them, but rather we must destroy the division that separates them all together. Therefore in the aesthetic state, we no longer see the laws of the moral and physical states as working separately, which often sets the human in internal conflict, and the laws are made to work together to form an internal necessity that is at home with itself. Instead of avoiding the constraints created by laws, the freedom constructed through beauty embraces these laws within the self:

Jene bedenken aber nicht, dass die Freiheit, in welche sie mit allem Recht das Wesen der Schönheit setzen, nicht Gesetzlosigkeit, sondern Harmonie von Gesetzen, nicht Willkürlichkeit, sondern höchste innere Notwendigkeit ist; diese bedenken nicht, dass die Bestimmtheit, welche sie mit gleichem Recht von der Schönheit fordern, nicht in der Ausschliessung gewisser Realitäten, sondern in der absoluten Einschliessung aller besteht, dass sie also nicht Begrenzung, sondern Unendlichkeit ist. (626)

Unlike the negative freedom that is conceptualized by philosophers like Hobbes and Locke, which is conditioned on the absence of force or constraint on our action, Schiller sees the rejection of physical and moral laws as rejecting important constitutive parts of the self that realizes freedom. Yet the different relationship we have with these two sets of laws is what creates the difficulty in our imbalanced state. We relate to the laws of the physical state in a passive manner because we have no choice about them, while the moral laws require us to be active in implementing them because they are empty. Both states, however, provide us with a mode of determination. Determination by the moral state, although active, is also empty because it is infinite potential without matter.

Therefore, the limitation provided by the material of the physical state allows the moral laws to have traction in actuality, and it is this mixture of determinability that gives the self real determination and freedom. Although many people focus on freedom that is based in our rationality, Schiller emphasizes in a note at the end of the nineteenth letter that it is freedom that arises from our “gemischte Natur” (631n) that concerns him rather than the empty intellectual freedom. Instead of conceptualizing our material existence as a hindrance to our moral existence, which is what we think of when we look at instances of tragedy or personal frustration, Schiller wants us to think about our material existence as valuable in that the limitations it provides gives our moral side actual force in our lives.

One final aspect that I think is important for the concept of play is Schiller’s discussion concerning aesthetic semblance. In the *Ästhetische Briefe*, Schiller seems to be constantly making subtle changes in how we intellectually approach the self, moving away from hierarchical models, restoring the significance of our sensuous nature and condition, and putting the aesthetic as the site by which we can discover human freedom. Thus the emphasis of play also lends to a change in attitude, since we are seeing a shift in one’s priorities and ways of thinking about the self. One of the important characteristics that Schiller highlights in humanity is the delight in semblance, which establishes a propensity to play and art (655-6). Yet those imbalanced in either direction tend to be weak in this propensity: “Die höchste Stupidität und der höchste Verstand haben darin eine gewisse Affinität mit einander, dass beide nur das Reelle suchen und für den blossen Schein gänzlich unempfindlich sind” (656). The ability to appreciate semblance as mere semblance, thus accurately identifying and separating it from other pursuits, is an ability

that allows us to take it seriously while being able to play with it. The weight of constraints provided by nature and morality become lifted when they appear in semblance, which gives the human the means to think with them as constitutive to oneself rather than a resistance to the self. Schiller goes on to identify this ability as what allows us to step into culture, since our imagination becomes freed to explore the potentials that are possible within the bounds of our ontologically divided existence. The term “aesthetic semblance” is thus distinguished from another form of semblance, which is “logical semblance”:

Es versteht sich von selbst, das hier nur von dem ästhetischen Schein die Rede ist, den man von der Wirklichkeit und Wahrheit unterscheidet, nicht von dem logischen, den man mit derselben verwechselt – den man folglich liebt, weil er Schein ist, und nicht, weil man ihn für etwas Besseres halt.

Nur der erste ist Spiel, da der letzte bloss Betrug ist. (656-657)

Logical semblance is a deceptive attitude because it confuses semblance with actuality or truth, which are the end objects of the sensuous and formal drives. The play drive sets up an important attitude for humans because it can set these demands of the first two drives at a distance, setting aside their necessity in order to appreciate the semblance that faces us. It is for this reason that the fine arts constitute an important part in our ability to play, and we can now see the development of human capacity of freedom in how the individual relates to art. Initially stuck in actuality, within the sensuous drive, the individual may view art as autonomous and magical, and the approach of imitation is initially from our appreciation for the arts. Yet over time, as we overcome the material and embrace our formal sides, we see behind this aesthetic semblance as we pursue truth. It is at this point

that Schiller warns that those in pursuit of truth, identifying semblance as it is, may debase art for its lack of truth and try to leave it behind, which we see in Plato. In doing so, such individuals risk lapsing back into logical semblance, since Schiller seems to imply that semblance is something that never leaves our Condition and the formal drive can become blind in its own myopia. Yet if one learns to appreciate mere semblance for what it is and finding value in this engagement in art, one discovers an inner and outer freedom that is absent when we are ruled by the division of the two drives. This transition of moving from *mimesis* to *poiesis*, or from audience member to artist, marks an important shift to an active consciousness that still acknowledges its limits and the contributions of the physical and moral states that we occupy.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, although aesthetic semblance tends to not receive much attention in its connection to play, it does seem to be an important piece in understanding how the play drive works in Schiller's *Ästhetische Briefe*, and how it leads to his construction of a self based in harmony rather than domination.

Although Schiller has received attention for his appeal to the concept of play in his system, the actual nature of the concept has been unfortunately clouded by a history of misreadings within the interdisciplinary field of play theory. In *The Ambiguity of Play*, Brian Sutton-Smith has perpetuated this misreading in play theory by naming Schiller as one of the key framers of the Surplus Energy Theory. This theory attempts to explain the occurrence of play as an expression of excess energy that is the result of efficiently

---

<sup>16</sup> In *The Malaise of Modernity*, Charles Taylor attacks this shift from *mimesis* to *poiesis* as a point in modernity where culture turned inwards and away from reality and bigger constellations of life (62-5). However, this seems to be from Taylor's reading self-discovery is only a subjective experience, whereas Schiller is asserting that there is also an objective side of the self that exists.

meeting the normal demands of life (Sutton-Smith 75). Sutton-Smith explains that this theory had a wide audience in the late nineteenth century as teachers were trying to understand the erratic behaviour of their young students in the classroom, noting the difficulty of keeping young children focussed enough to learn. The practice of recess, which allowed children to get out of their seats and engage in outdoor activities and games, helped in linking that play behaviour was linked to having large amounts of energy that needed to be released (Sutton-Smith 112). Sutton-Smith does not explain as to why he links Schiller to this theory of play, but a later work by Gordon Burghardt (*The Genesis of Animal Play*) provides us with the textual evidence that this link relies on (28). In the twenty-seventh letter, Schiller states:

Zwar hat die Natur auch schon dem Vernunftlosen über die Notdurft gegeben und in das dunkle tierische Leben einen Schimmer von Freiheit gestreut. Wenn den Löwen kein Hunger nagt und kein Raubtier zum Kampf herausfordert, so erschafft sich die müßige Stärke selbst einen Gegenstand; mit mutvollem Gebrüll erfüllt er die hallende Wüste, und in zwecklosem Aufwand genießt sich die üppige Kraft. Mit frohem Leben schwärmt das Insekt in dem Sonnenstrahl; auch ist es sicherlich nicht der Schrei der Begierde, den wir in dem melodischen Schlag des Singvogels hören. Unleugbar ist in diesen Bewegungen Freiheit, aber nicht Freiheit von dem Bedürfnis überhaupt, bloß von einem bestimmten, von einem äußern Bedürfnis. Das Tier *arbeitet*, wenn ein Mangel die Triebfeder seiner Tätigkeit ist, und es *spielt*, wenn der Reichtum der Kraft diese

Triebfeder ist, wenn das überflüssige Leben sich selbst zur Tätigkeit stacheln. (662-663)

In relying on this citation in isolation, it is easy to see why Schiller would be considered to be the originator of the surplus energy theory, rather than Herbert Spencer who actually develops this passage into a psychological theory (Burghardt 28). And what Schiller presents in this passage is not easy to push aside, since he sets out a specific distinction as to when animals work versus when they are playing. Yet there are three reasons for why I argue that the emphasis of this passage has unduly distorted how we read Schiller's concept of play.

The first reason is that this passage is focused on play behavior that arises from animals, not humans, and therefore is restricted to the physical state. Schiller has already discussed in the fifteenth letter that he wishes to expand our understanding of play beyond the mere sensuous instantiations of it that we observe, thus including examples of play that arise from our moral sense as well. Human play will therefore need to be more complex than animal play, since humans find themselves between the physical and moral state, a mode of existence that he does not grant other animals. Since animals have not awakened from their slumber in nature (although I have not read anything in Schiller to exclude the possibility of this as a future development), they have no access to the moral state. Schiller also argues that our narratives of humans in a pure sensuous state is also an ideal, and we never find modern humans purely in the physical state. Thus attributing the surplus energy theory of play, which for example arose to explain why children play, seems to be problematic if it is the central feature that structures the concept. The second reason for deemphasizing the surplus energy reading stems out of my first reason, which

this reading ignores Schiller's discomfort in the second letter towards the economic focus of modern society. The surplus energy theory conceptualizes play as a result of material vitality, and such a conception gives undue emphasis to the physical state. When we put this passage along side the rest of the letters, especially in letters where there is a focus on balancing between energizing and melting beauty, we can see how inappropriately skewed this interpretation of Schiller really is. Finally, I tend to disagree with the surplus energy reading of Schiller because I think this passage becomes more consistent with the rest of the letters if we emphasize his focus on the lack compulsion rather than the overflowing of life in this provided example of play. Animals are at work when they are driven by lack or emptiness, while play behavior arises when the behavior is done for itself and not determined by a need (which for the animal would only be the sensuous drive). Thus if we want to use this passage to understand Schiller's deeper concept of play that would also apply to humans when we add the complications of the moral state, the reading of freedom from compulsion makes more sense.

Another interpretation that has arisen has been to characterize Schiller's concept of play as merely imagination. These interpretations tend to recognize Schiller's treatment of aesthetic semblance, but they unfortunately reduced the appreciation of aesthetic semblance with mere imitation and fantasy. In *Political Ideals of the Romantic Age*, Isaiah Berlin takes off with this interpretation of Schiller, where play is a means to bypass material frustrations by merely ignoring them. In characterizing Schiller's concept, he states: "Children, when they play a game, give full freedom to their imagination, and suspend those laws which may in fact hold in the ordinary world, and create ideal types endowed only with such characteristics and bound only with such laws

as their authors choose” (173). From Berlin’s interpretation, children play by suspending reality, thus actually avoiding the obstacles that frustrate them to obtain an empty pleasure of thinking they’ve achieved something. Berlin thus reads Schiller as discussing play in adult life as merely created and imposed ideals upon dead matter, where art is a violent act that never takes into consideration the material it works with (173-4).

Burghardt also seems to take Schiller’s appreciation of semblance in this vein, where the essence of play in this manner is make-believe or pretend.<sup>17</sup> Burghardt links this semblance theory to a tradition that runs through psychoanalysis, thus characterizing this form of play with wishfulfillment and avoidance of reality as did Berlin.

It is important to note that there are passages that explain this interpretation of play as mere imagination, yet reading them in isolation from the discourse of the life sciences in the eighteenth-century and the original German text ignores important aspects of these passages. Burghardt relies on the following passage for his interpretation from the translation by Wilkinson and Willoughby: “And soon as the play-drive begins to stir, with its pleasure in semblance, it will be followed by the shaping spirit of imitation, which treats semblance as something autonomous”<sup>18</sup> (Schiller *On the Aesthetic* 195). Wilkinson and Willoughby translate “Bildungstrieb” as “the shaping spirit of imitation”, which is a mistranslation. The term *Bildungstrieb* had a narrow use in the eighteenth

---

<sup>17</sup> What is interesting in Burghardt’s treatment is that he does not account for the conflict between the two interpretations he provides of Schiller’s concept of play: he provides Schiller as the framer of both the surplus energy theory and the semblance theory, yet in each treatment moves forward as though he is treating with an essential aspect of Schiller’s concept of play. To his credit, however, he does provide the important passages that often lead to the interpretations in question.

<sup>18</sup> For the German: “Gleich, sowie der Spieltrieb sich regt, der am Scheine Gefallen findet, wird ihm auch der nachahmende Bildungstrieb folgen, der den Schein als etwas Selbständiges behandelt” (Schiller 657).

century thanks to it being a neologism by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, an influential professor of anatomy and comparative zoology at Göttingen. The term arose as a vitalist concept to depict the self-organizing principle of living organisms, one that even Kant openly integrates into his own work.<sup>19</sup> Although his predecessor Caspar Wolff postulated the vitalist concept of *vis essentialis*, an essential power that was necessary for life to emerge out of its mechanistic parts, Blumenbach postulated the *Bildungstrieb* as a force that gives organisms the ability to make its structure that is compatible with the matter it must work with. Although Blumenbach agreed with Wolff that the *vis essentialis* is a necessary condition for life, it was not sufficient to account for complex structures that we see in animals and plants that notably adapt to conditions around them. *Vis essentialis* could only account for growth, but not form.<sup>20</sup> Yet what is important about the *Bildungstrieb* is that the form it constructs is not predetermined outside of the material it has to work with, and this is going against the preformationists who believed that all creatures have an unchanging teleology that directs their development from genesis (Gigante 18-21). According to the preformationists in the Enlightenment, any deviation from this teleological form would be considered to be a deviation or abnormality, while Blumenbach's conception of *Bildungstrieb* would explain the phenomena as adaptation to material circumstances. Form is able to adapt in order to accommodate for the overall life of the organism, and we must keep in mind that the form is not imposed upon the material in this model. Thus, Schiller's use of *Bildungstrieb*, given that his training in

---

<sup>19</sup> For a more extensive look at Blumenbach's influence, see the Introduction of *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* by Denise Gigante. Kant specifically brings up Blumenbach in the *Kritik Der Teleologischen Urteilskraft* during his discussion of epigenesis in §81.

<sup>20</sup> This is another reason why the surplus energy theory becomes problematic, since it ignores the formal side that Schiller wants to integrate into play.

philosophy of medicine was in the midst of these debates in physiology and medicine, is probably mobilizing this dynamic of life as he is discussing the play drive's delight in semblance. To take it as merely imagination or an escape from reality would be ignoring the biological connotations of the term.

In addition, we must put the passage in the context of development, where the passage is depicting the emergence of the play drive rather than a contemporary function. In the twenty-sixth letter, where this passage above was taken from, Schiller is discussing the ability to take a delight in semblance that is distinctly different from the condition of animals trapped in nature. Later, Schiller talks about the developed power of a free imagination that is liberated from the utilitarian thinking of the sensuous drive, but the appreciation of semblance as semblance is an important step to properly use imagination. Thus, he states:

Dieses menschliche Herrscherrecht übt er aus in der Kunst des Scheins,  
und je strenger er hier das Mein und Dein von einander sondert, je  
sorgfältiger er die Gestalt von dem Wesen trennt, und je mehr  
Selbständigkeit er derselben zu geben weiss, desto mehr wirder nicht bloss  
das Reich der Schönheit erweitern, sondern selbst die Grenzen der  
Wahrheit bewahren; denn er kann den Schein nicht von der Wirklichkeit  
reinigen, ohne zugleich die Wirklichkeit von dem Schein frei zu machen.  
(658)

Schiller emphasizes that the delight in semblance is not a retreat from actuality, but rather is the important emergence of the ability to see the difference between semblance and actuality and to keep them distinguished. Thus the interpretations put forward by Berlin

and Berghardt seem to be reading play as logical semblance, the confusion of semblance with truth and actuality, but Schiller makes a point to make distinct when he discusses aesthetic semblance. The development of imagination is important to Schiller, but not because it avoids reality. His concern is that the myopic utilitarian quality of the sensuous drive inhibits us from seeing alternative developments within a moment, which the formal drive is able to see due to its eternal quality that compares moments. Like knowledge and love, however, imagination without reality is empty, and thus an imagination that avoids reality is leading to formal egoism.

The final aspect that I would like to address is that Schiller's play drive does retain, despite criticisms from various interpreters, important aspects for his political and social project that is set out in the first part of the *Ästhetische Briefe*. One major criticism that has emerged about Schiller's project is that he begins with a focus on the French Revolution and political freedom, yet it seems that he abandons this project for a defense of the autonomy of art. Martha Woodmansee frames this criticism in *Author, Art, and the Market*, where the freedom that Schiller is discussing loses its political inflection as we move through the argument. She accuses Schiller of counterrevolutionary intentions, highlighting his doubts about the average person in Europe being capable of self-rule, as well as distrust for Bourgeoisie's appropriation of art in the marketplace. At the end of the project, she reads Schiller as arguing for an escapist function of art, one stripped of its materialistic concerns (Woodmansee 58, 73, 85-6). Woodmansee is correct to highlight the passages that express Schiller's concern for the current state of the French Revolution and Bourgeois capitalism, but it is unfair to characterize him as wanting to return to a pre-Revolutionary state. Instead, Schiller highlights the disharmony of the current

society between uneducated masses and the bourgeois elite, which became apparent in the Reign of Terror. Yet this does not mean that he is rejecting the French Revolution due to the violence that ensued. We should remember from the discussion earlier that Schiller does emphasize the importance of sublime experiences, which such moments make apparent the division of forces. Given Schiller's narrative in the first half of the letters, such an event can also serve as an important break for the general people from their slumber. Also, for Schiller, although we must historically retrace as best we can our path out of nature, such an inquiry is not to submit to the development, but rather to gain a workable distance from it (573-4). Therefore, such accusations of desiring a return to a past state are unmerited.

The problem that faces Schiller's political project emerges from his anthropological observation that the individual and society are deeply intertwined, and he challenges the mechanical understanding of politics of the Early Modern period. In *Schiller as Philosopher*, Frederick Beiser frames the problem as an issue of circularity in the position of republicanism. Beiser situates Schiller in the republican tradition, along with figures such as Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Ferguson, as opposed to modern individualism that is characterized by Hobbes, Locke, Mandeville and Kant (*Schiller* 125).<sup>21</sup> The circularity of republicanism is that the foundation of the republic is a virtuous people who invest in the common good, yet the development of that virtue

---

<sup>21</sup> Given Schiller's distinction between "Individuum" (individual) and "Individualität" (individuality), I think Beiser is correct to oppose Schiller to the modern individualism tradition emerging out of England. *Individuum* is a numerical singularity that is found in nature, but is unable to express its independence of nature. *Individualität* is realized only when the sensuous *Individuum* is harmonized with infinite form, and thus individuality is not found as given in nature. However, putting Kant alongside Hobbes, Locke and Mandeville on this issue could be disputed.

requires the republic that is structured around the common good to be already in place (Beiser *Schiller* 126). We can think of Plato concerning this dilemma, where there is a detailed explanation of how the republic can degenerate from one constitution to a lower constitution, but he never provides an upward movement to a higher constitution. To move upward, either the people must on their own form virtuous character to establish the state, or the state must be constructed to lead the people to virtue. Rousseau identifies this problem in *The Social Contract* when he distinguishes the General Will from the Will of All (60), where the people's interest in the common good forms the general will and the self-interest that we collectively hold characterizes the will of all. A people can act collectively, but without virtue that is cultivated by a legitimate government, there is a real danger of it being the power of the majority that is no different from the right of the stronger (Rousseau *Social Contract* 48-9). Rousseau's solution was to instill a civic religion upon the people, where this religion would eventually move the people to realize that their interest was constituted in part by the general will and the preservation of the republic, a process that Rousseau hoped would make the citizen realize that the general will emanated from the body politic rather than being a transcendent power (Rousseau *Social Contract* 142-51). Yet as Beiser points out, the route of civic religion is not acceptable since 1) it would violate Schiller's liberal principles concerning conscience and 2) religion had lost creditability with the public in the Enlightenment (*Schiller* 128). Instead of religion, which relies on the state to form the people, Schiller turns to aesthetic education. Yet this is where many begin to diverge on interpreting Schiller's solution due to his lack of detail as to what this education would consist of.<sup>22</sup> For example, Georg

---

<sup>22</sup> As Elizabeth Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby aptly note in their Introduction: "For a  
70

Lukács points out in *The Young Hegel* that Schiller does not believe that the people are a result of revolution, but rather they are needed to bring about revolution, and thus changing the state itself is not sufficient until the people are ready to bring about their own empowerment. Yet Lukács immediately reads Schiller as being a pessimist about this prospect, and reads Schiller's solution more so as a resignation to the dilemma of modern Europe (15). Beiser however characterizes aesthetic education as though it is the job of artists to educate the public, which he states would be a considerable burden to use their influence over the people while being independent of the state (*Schiller* 129). Even Woodmansee characterizes this aesthetic education as needing to be divorced from the market, which significantly isolates art from the material practices of society (85). If any of these interpretations are correct, it is difficult to see how Schiller's solution maintains its political aims while containing hope for the people to move forward into a virtuous republic.

I argue that at this point it is important to return to Schiller's training in the life sciences, which Schiller's solution is pulling from his understanding of the organic. Schiller very early on understands that the organic and the political are deeply intertwined, and that violence of the state or of the people arises when there is a disharmony between reason and nature. In the fourth letter, Schiller asserts that from an anthropological view, both reason and nature must be respected in their demands made upon humanity, where reason demands unity while nature demands multiplicity. This has important moral as well as political dimensions: "Daher wird es jederzeit von einer noch mangelhaften Bildung zeugen, wenn der sittliche Charakter nur mit Aufopferung des

---

book proclaiming the virtue of aesthetic education, Schiller's has surprisingly little to say about the concrete particulars of art" (*Schiller Aesthetic* xi).

natürlichen sich behaupten kann, und eine Staatsverfassung wird noch sehr unvollendet sein, die nur durch Aufhebung der Mannigfaltigkeit Einheit zu bewirken imstande ist” (Schiller 577). An education or political state that sacrifices or suppresses multiplicity is seen as defective, since it achieves its result only through violence to another part of the whole. The unity is artificial in that the harmony realized is only uniformity to an imposed form. And Schiller is quite aware that the same is the case for the artist when she works with inorganic matter, whether she be an artisan (“mechanische Künstler”) or a fine artist (“schöne Künstler”):

Wenn der mechanische Künstler seine Hand an die gestaltlose Masse legt, um ihr die Form seiner Zwecke zu geben, so trägt er kein Bedenken, ihr Gewalt anzutun; denn die Natur, die er bearbeitet verdient für sich selbst keine Achtung, und es liegt ihm nicht an dem Ganzen um der Teile willen, sondern an den Teilen um des Ganzen willen, sondern an den Teilen um des Ganzen willen. Wenn der schöne Künstler seine Hand an die nämliche Masse legt, so trägt er ebensowenig Bedenken, ihr Gewalt anzutun, nur vermeidet er, sie zu zeigen. Den Stoff, den er bearbeitet, respektiert er nicht im geringsten mehr als der mechanische Künstler; aber das Auge, welches die Freiheit dieses Stoffes in Schutz nimmt, wird er durch eine scheinbare Nachgiebigkeit gegen denselben zu täuschen suchen. Ganz anders verhält es sich mit dem pädagogischen und politischen Künstler, der den Menschen zugleich zu seinem Material und zu seiner Aufgabe macht. Hier kehrt der Zweck in den Stoff zurück, und

nur weil das Ganze den Teilen dient, dürfen sich die Teile dem Ganzen  
fügen. (578)

This lengthy passage reveals some important aspects of Schiller's view of aesthetic education. For one thing, the fine artist ("schöne Künstler") will not be the one who is in charge of the education program, but rather it will be directed by the pedagogic and political artist ("pädagogischen und politischen Künstler"). The reason for this is that both the artisan and the fine artist use violence against the material in their work, which the matter they work with demands no respect because it is inorganic. The work of the fine artist only becomes separated from the artisan, and thus from the mechanical, in that the fine artist hides her violence from the audience, as though the form organically arose from the material. Although the fine artist hides her violence, this is not sufficient when it comes to the education of humans or the formation of a humane polis. As with all mechanical systems, the multiple parts coming from nature are organized for serving the whole, but the whole does not serve the multiplicity of nature. The pedagogic or political artist must achieve the organic, where the multiple parts serve the whole inasmuch as they are served by the whole itself through their participation. Thus violence is not legitimate, since true harmony of content and form must be achieved in the human. As Denise Gigante points out, living form is inherently political for Schiller, since organic matter demands respect from those who work with it as much as the demands of reason. In the sixth letter, Schiller uses the ancient Greek states as an example of this political organicism, which he describes as having a "Polypennatur", i.e. "wo jedes Individuum eines unabhängigen Lebens genoss und, wenn es not tat, zum Ganzen werden konnte" (Schiller 584). The use of the polyp is not by accident, which discovery of the

regenerative capacities of the arm-polyp, the hydra, in the 1740s dealt a significant blow to preformationists and provided evidence for epigenesis (Gigante 13-4). Since the hydra was able to regenerate not only cut of limbs, but also the entire body from the severed limb, the contemporary ideas of the relation of form (often conceived as teleological) and organic matter became significantly challenged because it gave an instance of life where the part could survive without the whole. Teleological thinkers who approached life with a mechanical understanding were hitting a wall with such discoveries, opening up alternative approaches such as vitalism and epigenesis. Schiller argues that the western world moved from this polyp-nature to a more mechanical way of living (which he specifically uses the image of the clock), where specialization required each individual to take their place in the larger whole (Schiller 584).<sup>23</sup> Yet the whole was indifferent to the parts as long as this process of specialization kept the state running, and this formed an imbalanced development where individuals are consumed by specialized talents. Schiller does argue that this imbalance was necessary for the development of civilization out of nature, and the mechanical approach to politics did serve a historical purpose for the species that needs to be acknowledged (586-7). However, this mechanistic understanding must be transcended, and the state (and its corresponding education) must respect individuals as something more than parts of a machine. The mechanical approach to politics works only if there is an autocratic regime in place that sets the agenda of the

---

<sup>23</sup> In *Dialectic of Love: Platonism in Schiller's Aesthetics*, David Pugh states that there is no indisputable evidence that Schiller read Plato, but he does argue that issues in Plato's work can be traced down to Schiller based on the figures that he did read and who educated him at the Karlschule (4-7). Therefore, even if Schiller hadn't directly read Plato, it is understandable that we can see Schiller responding to issues from *Republic* and *Symposium*. However, it should be noted that Schiller does refer to a "platonische Republik" (Schiller SW 421) in the *Kallias Briefe*, thus giving some evidence that he had read Plato at this point in his career.

state, but the republic democracies emerging from the Enlightenment require an organic political philosophy that accounts for the needs of the parts and the whole together. It is on this account that I must disagree with Beiser when he characterizes Schiller's commitment to republicanism at the expense of those who argued for a *Lokalvernunft* (Schiller 130-1). Beiser characterizes people of this position as right-wing thinkers who did not believe that there could be an overarching rationality that could address the complexities of local circumstances. Thus pure reason could never have a role in guiding political practice for those who were in the extreme in this position, which could be reflected across the Atlantic in the United States by the anti-federalists who opposed the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. Beiser is correct in noting that Schiller disagreed with these thinkers on the position that pure reason does have a significant role in establishing a political state, but it is much more complicated than setting up a dichotomous discourse that places Schiller on the opposite side of a republicanism that favours pure reason. Schiller is aware that the emptiness of pure reason causes problems for its application to political issues, and thus the *Lokalvernunft* position does make legitimate points that need to be integrated into his solution. This is why his use of "Polypennature" and "Bildungstrieb" becomes important, which living form is an important target for aesthetic education due its respect for and development of the form that arises from living matter. Although the goal is to find unity within the multiplicity of human individuals, this unity cannot be realized by the domination of rational form over matter.

Thus the importance of aesthetic education is that it makes individuals who are active and feeling, not passive and cold to one another. As noted earlier, Beiser seems to

characterize aesthetic education as an education program that is in the hands of fine artists, and seems to approach the experience of the aesthetic from the perspective of audience members. Yet Schiller explicitly is looking forward to an expansion of our understanding of the aesthetic and play to encompass all aspects of the self. In a note in the twentieth letter, Schiller discusses that we can approach a thing through four different aspects. We talk of the physical character when it relates to our sensual condition, the logical character when it relates to our intellect, and our moral character when it relates to our will. The aesthetic character is when it relates to all of these aspects without a definite distinction between these functions, and thus “aesthetic” for Schiller is a totality of the different ways we can look at something (633n-4n). When Schiller discusses the role of the pedagogic or political artist, her role is not to make the student or the citizen into a passive mechanical part, but rather an active rational will embedded in a physical context, and thus the individual is given due respect for her reason and for her nature. This may be why Schiller addresses the aesthetic state as an end for itself, but at the same time noting that the realization of this end gives us an effective realization of the moral state as well. The aesthetic state includes the laws of nature, logic, and the moral, and this brings these laws into harmony into one another in a state where we do not feel laws as a constraint (614n). Thus this new form of education needs to go beyond the current state of fine art that produces a semblance that hides violence, and instead provide aesthetic semblance that actually embraces non-violence. As we will see in the next chapter, Schelling will also look to art for a brief number of years as a site where nature and reason can meet, but arguably for different reasons.

## CHAPTER 2

### F.W.J. Schelling's Use of Play in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*

Just as Schiller recognized the importance of narrating the emergence of the rational self from unconscious nature over a reconstructed timeline, F.W.J. Schelling also embarks on a similar project in his *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* of 1800. Although Schelling comes from a background of theology, having been trained at the *Tübinger Stift*, he still ends the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* by turning to art as a solution to join self-consciousness with unconscious nature to give a glimpse of the absolute. Yet like Schiller, Schelling has a very specific, normative definition when he mobilizes the concept of the aesthetic in his system. This concept delineates between the aesthetic activity and the product of art that we can mimic, thus asserting that art must have an element of indeterminacy between that part of us that is subjectively conscious and the part that is objectively unconscious. In this chapter, I argue that in order to bridge his developments in *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy, Schelling expands Schiller's concept of play, noting the importance of a delimited realm of activity that preserves the indeterminacy of the aesthetic as the "Ich"<sup>24</sup> reflects back on its origins and ground in nature. However, although I believe that Schiller has provided some

---

<sup>24</sup> In this chapter, given the unquestionable influence Johann Fichte had upon Schelling and the moves Schelling makes through the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, I will translate his use of "Ich" as "Ego" rather than "Self". As I explain how self-consciousness renders "Ego" as a finite object in order to grasp itself, it becomes apparent that Schelling is referring to a series of "Egos" that are overcome rather than a consistent perspective of self in the *STI*. In Alan White's *Schelling: An Introduction to the System of Freedom*, there is also this close attention to how to translate "Ich" within the *STI* that corrects Peter Heath's 1978 translation that assumes "Ich" translates as "self".

inspiration in the moves he makes in order to move towards his proposed solution at the end of *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (which will be referred to from now as the *STI*), Schelling decides to emphasize the dialectical movement of art that moves beyond the boundary that was established and yet still preserves the tension that is generated by the limit. In order to unfold this development of the play concept, I first explain Schelling's understanding of the tensions he wants to grapple with in the *STI*, specifically the tension he sees between theoretical and practical philosophy. Schelling develops from this tension the importance of the limit upon the Ego, setting into motion the developments in theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy in Parts III and IV. Finally, I argue for why I think he turns to the aesthetic as a culmination of these developments, defining aesthetic activity so that one of its important functions is to preserve a realm of indeterminacy and tension of the differentiated parts within the absolute, where both truth and freedom are acknowledged from different perspectives. As such, I briefly discuss how this dynamic is preserved in his later lectures concerning mythology, where this function of the aesthetic still serves a purpose of allowing creativity while preserving truths that have been determined. Although self-consciousness is put forward as an important development within the ongoing complexity of unconscious Nature, Schelling wants to maintain room for the potential creations of the unconscious alongside the conscious Ego, maintaining a space of play between the two.

Before starting this line of thought, I do want to quickly address the issue concerning the uncertainty of Schiller's influence upon Schelling's work in the *STI*. As to be expected, much of the scholarship concerning Schelling's influences concentrates

upon Johann Fichte, which their friendship had started to disintegrate starting around 1800 as Schelling began to develop critical objections to Fichte in his *Naturphilosophie* (Beiser *German Idealism* 491-4). As Beiser points out in *German Idealism*, it took Schelling a long time to part ways with Fichte, which the two had repeatedly attempted to reconcile their differences out of hopes to collaborate on projects (469-71). Yet, as Schelling insisted on feedback from Fichte on his work, the two could no longer ignore how Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* was at odds with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Since 1800 was a significant point of this rupture, some read the *STI* in line with Fichte's philosophy. Although Fichte's influence is unmistakable, Michael Vater goes so far in his "Introduction" to the English translation *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)* to say that although it is perhaps one of his most polished and systematic works, it is far from his most original (xi). Instead of seeing it as a break from Fichte, Vater interprets Schelling's critical points as merely undeveloped thoughts that only surface in a more pronounced manner in his later works. As such, Vater reads Schelling as putting primacy upon practical philosophy, as though his concern about theoretical philosophy (and thus his *Naturphilosophie*) is merely to make sure it fits within the bounds of Fichte's project (xvi-vii). However, this mode of interpretation ignores important aspects of how Schelling sets up the problem in the *STI*, and it ignores the timeline of how Schelling developed his thought. As Beiser highlights, the cracks between Fichte and Schelling had formed before the *STI* in Schelling's previous works on *Naturphilosophie*, a project that at its very foundation pushed against the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Specifically, Beiser traces the crack back to 1799 between his *Einleitung zu den Ideen einer Philosophie der*

*Natur* of 1797 and the *Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (1797).<sup>25</sup> By the time Schelling writes the *STI*, he is insistent that *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy were equal in that they revealed different, yet both important, aspects of the absolute.<sup>26</sup> Thus, as much as Fichte's influence is present in the *STI*, we must not be reductionists with Schelling's concerns.

Given this emphasis on Fichte's influence upon Schelling, as well as the lack of philosophical scholarship on Schiller in the English speaking world, there is unfortunately very little discussion concerning whether Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* had much impact upon Schelling's thought in the *STI*. In *Une philosophie en devenir*, Xavier Tilliette is one of the few who openly acknowledges Schelling's friendship with Schiller, and attributes this partly to Schelling's shift away from his earlier Fichtean position in the *STI* (Vol. I, 226-7). Also, in "The Influence of Schiller's Theory of Nature on Hegel's Philosophical Development", Michael Hoffheimer notes that Hegel, after reading the first two instalments of *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* as it was published in *Die Horen* (Letters 1-16), wrote to Schelling in April of 1795 praising the essay as a "masterpiece" (Hoffheimer

---

<sup>25</sup> Arguably, one can see this rupture forming as early as 1794 within Schelling's earlier works like *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (1794), *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (1795), and *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* (1795). Although Schelling stays within acceptable boundaries of Fichte's work, he was also focused on reconciling the insights of Spinoza with Kant's critical philosophy. Within a few years, Schelling's concern about the status of objective "Nature" inevitably came into conflict with Fichte's subjective idealism.

<sup>26</sup> Soon after the *STI*, in his *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozesses* in March 1800, Schelling then insists upon the priority of *Naturphilosophie* rather than merely just having an equal standing to transcendental philosophy (Beiser *German Philosophy* 488-9). He then seems to take a step back from this in 1801 in *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*.

236), thus signalling that Schelling would have had been aware of its release. More importantly, it has been also noted that Hölderlin had a significant impact upon Schelling's thought, and thus we can at least trace Schiller's influence through this relationship.<sup>27</sup> Devin Shaw points out that Hölderlin and Schelling met twice in 1795 and once in 1796, right when Hölderlin was attempting to develop Schiller's project beyond what he saw were the limitations of Schiller's Kantianism.<sup>28</sup> Shaw notes that it is around this time that Schelling started to take an interest in developing a philosophy of art, and suspects that these meetings with Hölderlin had some impact (Shaw 57-8). Although Beiser doesn't cite any direct link between Schelling and Schiller in *German Idealism*, he does note in separate chapters that Schiller's work was quite influential in motivating Hölderlin's project (377, 82), and that in this time period Hölderlin was quite influential on Schelling, both in regards to Schelling's criticisms of Fichte and his development of absolute idealism (478-9). Given this evidence, I think it is reasonable to assert that Schiller has some presence in the *STI*, even if it was through Hölderlin, and some of the

---

<sup>27</sup> Already in 1795, Hölderlin was critical of Fichte's idealism, which in *Über Urtheil und Seyn* he points out that the identity of "I = I" cannot be an absolute being due to the internal division inherent within consciousness. Thus, Fichte's philosophy fails to reach the absolute in its emphasis on subjectivity. We also see dated back in 1797 the small fragment "The Old System-Program of German Idealism", which seems to be significantly influenced by Schiller with its for an aesthetic philosophy over a mechanical one (Behler 162). Although the author of this fragment is contested, most scholars narrow it down to Hegel, Schelling or Hölderlin, and believe that all three were momentarily in agreement on its contents when it was penned (Behler vii).

<sup>28</sup> Martin Heidegger points at the end of his lecture *Germanien* that Hölderlin turned to poetry because of what he considered to be the limits of the potential of philosophical language to understand Be-ing, since mere descriptions of nature (*Naturbeschreibungen*) or symbols (*Sinnbilder*) are too reductive in that they limit potential understandings. Heidegger argues that in poetic language these two types of images are in a state of play, and thus he thought that by reading Hölderlin playfully, he could achieve a more complete glimpse of Be-ing (Heidegger 150-1). Although Hölderlin is pushing Schiller's insights to the extreme here by dedicating himself to poetry, it still is undeniable that Schiller set the foundation for this aesthetic development.

elements of Schiller's philosophy that were highlighted in the previous chapter will also surface as Schelling deals with a concept of play through the aesthetic.

However, although Schiller may have had this influence in the background upon Schelling's approach to the aesthetic, Schelling clearly lays out, as Vater suggests, the major tension of his project at the beginning of *System des Transcendental Idealismus* along the terms of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (Vater xxi). Schelling recognizes that Kant's critical philosophy had left in its wake a number of problems that were left to be solved, not only because so many contemporary philosophers were still adjusting to the insights of the new system, but that it had generated entirely new problems as it shattered the dogmatic philosophies held before. Specifically, for transcendental idealism to be a system of knowledge, it not only had to account for how subjectivity conditions the possibility of knowledge, but it must account for the transcendental Ego as well (AS I, 397-8).<sup>29</sup> For knowledge to not merely fall into the arbitrariness of subjectivity, we must account for how the applying the categories of the understanding to intuition leads to objective knowledge. In the "Einleitung" of the *STI*, Schelling emphasizes that all knowledge (*Wissen*) must contain the objective and subjective, but we must explain how such distinct aspects supervene (*hinzukommen*) upon one another. He delineates the two into the following:

Wir können den Inbegriff alles bloß *Objectiven* in unserm Wissen *Natur* nennen; der Inbegriff alles *Subjektiven* dagegen heiße das *Ich*, oder die *Intelligenz*. Beide Begriffe sind sich entgegengesetzt. Die Intelligenz wird ursprünglich gedacht als das bloß Vorstellende, die Natur als das

---

<sup>29</sup> All citations from Schelling come from the *Ausgewählte Schriften in 6 Bänden* from Suhrkamp, abbreviated as *AS* with the volume and page number.

bloß Vorstellbare, jene als das Bewußte, diese als das Bewußtlose. Nun ist aber in jedem *Wissen* ein wechselseitiges Zusammentreffen beider (des Bewußten und des an sich Bewußtlosen) notwendig; die Aufgabe ist: dieses Zusammentreffen zu erklären. (AS I, 407)

Schelling sets the task of establishing the necessity of both subjectivity and objectivity by showing how the two ultimately depend on each other, just like Schiller's approach to such dialectics that result in knowledge, love and "self", even when we conceptually treat them as distinct. In doing so, he must address two possibilities: one account must take the objective as primary and explain why subjectivity overlaps with it and the other account must take the subjective as primary and explain why objectivity overlaps with it. As Beiser notes, Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is to provide the first account, stating that the very activity that occurs in conscious thinking of the Ego corresponds to unconscious activity of nature, and thus reason is not merely an arbitrary act of the subject (Beiser 471, 487). Yet this account would merely reduce the Ego into Nature, thus not accounting for why consciousness emerges to reflect back upon the unconscious in the first place. Nor would it account for why the conscious Ego experiences freedom in such a way that the products of unconscious Nature do not. Therefore, transcendental philosophy is the counterpart to *Naturphilosophie* by acknowledging how the Ego emerges from Nature while developing a different relationship so that we can account for the Ego's activity of reflection. Thus, as he states back in the "Vorede", both sciences are important in accounting for the differentiation and interaction of the conscious Ego and unconscious Nature. The *STI* in particular must provide the sequence of events that explains how consciousness emerged out of Nature to avoid Descartes' dualism, which

Schiller refers to in the *Ästhetische Briefen* without detail, while providing clear gradations of separations that avoids collapsing of the subjective into the objective as we see in Spinoza. Although Schelling acknowledges that nature is the ground for consciousness, he must find an account where we maintain the distinction at the end of the account, otherwise it becomes a reduction that undermines either the dignity of Nature or the dignity of consciousness.

The reason it is crucial for Schelling to maintain a non-reductionist account is that critical philosophy, as he defines it, makes its distinction from the dogmatic philosophies by maintaining this very tension without necessitating a collapse. Although dogmatic philosophers had no problem accounting for how the Ego had knowledge of nature because there was no division between the two, it also failed to account for the distinction and limitation of consciousness because it ended up pervading Nature with no established threshold or self-awareness.<sup>30</sup> Just as *Naturphilosophie* must maintain its purity as a science by making sure that nothing subjective is entangled into the knowledge it puts forth, so must transcendental philosophy avoid entangling anything objective into its principles of knowledge. However, critical philosophy maintains that we remain aware that these conceptual divisions are imposed by the Ego, just as Schiller had argued. Although Descartes made a fundamental insight in formulating the principle “I exist”, he failed to move forward to studying transcendental cognition when he insisted that the Ego needed to be reduced into an objective substance, thus failing to distinguish *Naturephilosophie* from transcendental philosophy. Moving forward with Kant’s insight

---

<sup>30</sup> We see Schelling working on this distinction back in 1795 with his essay *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus*, and he seems to keep these definitions of critical and dogmatic philosophy intact in the *STI*.

in the “Von den Paralogismen der Reinen Vernunft” of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Schelling notes that positing the Ego as substance into the world ignores that the proposition “There are things outside us” is merely fused to the proposition “I exist” in ordinary cognition because it is a mere prejudice. Transcendental philosophy suspends the identity of these two propositions in order to study the structure and activity of subjectivity, without the Cartesian move of dogmatically positing consciousness into the objective world. Yet Schelling takes Kant’s insight a step further by stating that transcendental philosophy requires intellectual intuition, i.e. an ability to shift its gaze upon the very structures of consciousness as it is set apart from the objective world from a viewpoint different from empirical intuition. This mode of cognition, which is through philosophical activity, turns on itself and reveals itself as a tension:

Die Natur der transzendentalen Betrachtungsart muß also überhaupt darin bestehen, *daß in ihr auch das, was in allem anderen Denken, Wissen oder Handeln das Bewußtsein flieht und absolut nicht-objectiv ist, zum Bewußtsein gebracht und objectiv wird, kurz: in einem beständigen Sich-selbst-Objekt Werden des Subjektiven.*

Die transzendente Kunst wird eben in der Fertigkeit bestehen, sich beständig in dieser Duplizität des Handelns und des Denkens zu erhalten. (AS I, 413)

In the very act of transcendental self-awareness, consciousness turns on itself to make itself an object, but this reveals that the Ego here is merely action rather than a substance, and self-consciousness is merely an action reflecting upon its own action. It is interesting that already at this point Schelling states that this tension is a “transzendentalen Kunst”,

where consciousness views itself as both object and subject, yet it must dance between these two views to maintain the tension from dissolving. This transcendental cognition must recognize the boundary within the Ego that differentiates between a thinking being and an acting being, yet this difference is easily dissolved if it remains merely transcendental activity.

This tension results in the divide within critical philosophy between theoretical and practical reason, where theoretical reason accounts for our cognition of the world while our practical reason recognizes our agency within the world. Each side of the division has a conviction that is at odds with the other, yet both convictions are necessary for either to operate. Thus conviction a), which describes the firm belief underlying theoretical reason, is stated as such:

Daß nicht nur unabhängig von uns eine Welt von Dingen außer uns existiere, sondern auch, daß unsere Vorstellungen so mit ihnen übereinstimmen, daß an den Dingen *nichts anderes* ist, als was wir an ihnen vorstellen. – Der Zwang in unseren objektiven Vorstellungen wird daraus erklärt, daß die Dinge unveränderlich bestimmt, und durch diese Bestimmtheit der Dinge mittelbar auch unsere Vorstellungen bestimmt seien. (AS I, 414)

If theoretical philosophy is unable to assume that the presentations of the world are not unalterably determined, it is unable to have a stable grasp to cognize the world. Even if we acknowledge that subjectivity must add structure to the presentations to make it even possible for objects to show up for us, thus carrying out the transcendental task of understanding the very conditions of the possibility of experience, it still must assume the

passivity of subjectivity as the foundation for this task. This runs up against the underlying conviction of practical philosophy, labelled conviction b): “Die zweite ebenso ursprüngliche Überzeugung ist, daß Vorstellungen, die *ohne Notwendigkeit, durch Freiheit*, in uns entstehen, aus der Welt des Gedankens in die wirkliche Welt übergehen und objektive Realität erlangen können” (AS I, 415). Practical philosophy, being concerned with action, must assume that the Ego is capable of acting upon objects in the world around it and must be able to manipulate the presentations of the world. As Kant asserts in his work in moral philosophy, the will must operate completely independent of the forces in the objective world in order to act autonomously, positing itself as a purely active being rather than a passive being.

Given that transcendental cognition reveals itself through self-consciousness as both thinking and acting activity, it finds itself having to grasp a harmony within an apparent contradiction between the ideal and the real. He sums up rather concisely the contradiction that faces critical philosophy as follows:

Nach b) wird gefordert eine Herrschaft des Gedankens (des Ideellen) über die Sinnenwelt; wie ist aber eine solche denkbar, wenn (nach a) die Vorstellung in ihrem Ursprung schon nur die Sklavin des Objektiven ist? – Umgekehrt, ist die wirkliche Welt etwas von uns ganz Unabhängiges, wonach (als ihrem Urbild) unsere Vorstellung sich richten muß (nach a), so ist unbegreiflich, wie hinwiederum die wirkliche Welt sich nach Vorstellungen in uns richten könne (nach b). – Mit einem Wort, über der theoretischen Gewißheit geht uns die praktische, über der praktischen die

theoretische verloren; es ist unmöglich, daß zugleich in unserer Erkenntnis Wahrheit, und in unserem Wollen Realität sei.” (AS I, 415-6)

As stated, if we choose one side over the other, we will lose grasp of a part of the self that we initially grasped in transcendental cognition. Dogmatic philosophies would handle this paradox by deciding between the real (theoretical philosophy) and the ideal (practical philosophy), and dissolve the independence of one side.<sup>31</sup> Yet as Schiller had noted in his own explication of the problem, we lose something fundamental when we go in either direction, and dissolving this tension will make the “certainty” attained vacuous because its own determination is conditioned through its other. Thus Schelling notes at the beginning of §3 of the “Einleitung”, in moving in either direction, we move away from the very perception of truth, which is the mediation of the two certainties of theoretical and practical reason.

How do we overcome this dualism? Just as Schiller acknowledges in the *Ästhetische Briefen*, one can never overcome a theoretical divide within transcendental philosophy without realizing that it is reason’s own critique that placed the divide in the first place. Thus Schelling states that in order to bridge the opposing convictions of theoretical and practical philosophy, we must realize that these two things are not radically opposed when we look to the absolute. Instead, there is a harmony that

---

<sup>31</sup> Although Paul Tillich frames this tension within the religious terms of “mysticism” and “guilt-consciousness”, he does emphasize in *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development* that the *STI* is framed around this issue between the passivity of theoretical reason (God’s knowledge of the world) and the activity of practical reason (free will to go against God). Tillich is motivated to frame the *STI* in these religious terms, however, because he is trying to show continuity within Schelling’s work and surrounding theological debates, even though Schelling explicitly avoids religious terminology when framing this issue between *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy.

underlies the appearance of paradox. Both *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy attempt to give an account of how the two are related, moving in opposite directions, but Schelling notes that both approaches, although essential, are insufficient to solve the problem. Both are abstract, and theoretically remain at their foundation opposed to one another. This is where Schelling comes into his major insight in that we are approaching the same activity from a different form of perception:

Nun ist es allerdings eine *productive* Tätigkeit, welche im Wollen sich äußert; alles freie Handeln ist produktiv, nur *mit Bewußtsein* productiv. Setzt man nun, da beide Tätigkeiten doch nur im Prinzip *eine* sein sollen, daß dieselbe Tätigkeit, welche im freien Handeln *mit Bewußtsein* produktiv ist, im Produzierenden der Welt *ohne Bewußtsein* produktiv sei, so ist jene vorausbestimmte Harmonie wirklich und der Widerspruch gelöst. (AS I, 416)

This differs from Schiller's approach due to Schelling's commitment to Spinozism, which Schelling assumes that there is a harmony in origin of the two opposing sides before the determination that ensures an identity of principle beyond the appearance.<sup>32</sup> Schiller, on the other hand, merely points out that the real and the ideal (as he divides it) do not necessarily conflict as they may initially appear, although their initial divide may (and descriptively do) cause struggle. Thus, the sensuous and the formal do not need to

---

<sup>32</sup> It should be acknowledged that Schelling went through some oscillation in regards of how to conceptualized the absolute. For example, in *Von der Weltseele* of 1798, he conceptualizes the absolute as differentiated internally in principle, and then switches to the absolute being unified in its origin in *Einleitung zu dem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* of 1799. Thus, although Schelling conceptualizes the absolute in the *STI* as a unity moving towards internal differentiation, he also notes that self-consciousness is a light that only shines forwards, making it impossible to grasp its own origins with certainty (AS I, 425).

be different aspects of the same thing for harmony to be reached in Schiller's model. Yet for Schelling, theoretical and practical philosophy must remain in tension, and thus the appearance of harmony as beauty is not what Schelling is seeking in this case. Although we have an identity between Nature and Ego due the fact that they are the manifestation of the same kind of activity, they are distinct in that Nature remains unconscious while the Ego becomes conscious. Since the activity of Nature remains unconscious, it is the development of consciousness that can reflect back upon the unconscious that is its ultimate production, and also the point where we move in this narrative from Nature to Ego. Thus:

Die Natur, als Ganzes sowohl, als in ihren einzelnen Produkten, wird als ein mit Bewußtsein hervorgebrachtes Werk, und doch zugleich als Produkt des blindesten Mechanismus erscheinen müssen; sie ist *zweckmäßig, ohne zweckmäßig erklärbar zu sein*. – Die Philosophie der Naturzwecke, oder die Teleologie ist also jener Vereinigungspunkt der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie. (AS I, 417)

Although the activity of Nature has purpose, it is not purpose that is revealed to itself as it carries out this activity. It is only within the consciousness of the Ego's theoretical reason that this purpose is reflected upon as a teleological activity. The reference to Kant's third moment of *Kritik der Urteilskraft* indicates that Nature is not constrained by any ideal of perfection or utility because it cannot reflect back to itself such goals to fulfil. It merely carries out its own disposition, and it encounters no impediments for it to justify to itself its own purpose or structure. Thus the idea of teleology and the idea of Nature as an object comes after the unconscious activity has been carried out, and Nature

remains out of sight from consciousness (although consciousness can reflect upon the traces of the unconscious production through its products). Thus *Naturphilosophie* culminates into philosophy concerning teleology because this is the point of recognition that Ego arises out Nature to reflect back upon its own origin, and we find a meeting point of theoretical and practical philosophy when we see consciousness emerging from the unconscious, shifting the from the real to the ideal. Yet now the *STI* must propose the equivalent of this development in transcendental philosophy.

It is at this point that Schelling turns to the aesthetic, which he puts forward as the site where transcendental philosophy culminates to a meeting of the conscious and unconscious again. It is not only one activity of many that instantiates this movement, but rather it is the *only* one according to Schelling:

Eine solche Tätigkeit ist allein die *ästhetische*, und jedes Kunstwerk ist nur zu begreifen als Produkt einer solchen. Die idealische Welt der Kunst und die reelle der Objekte sind also Producte einer und derselben Tätigkeit; das Zusammentreffen beider (der bewußten und der bewußtlosen) *ohne* Bewußtsein gibt die wirkliche, *mit* Bewußtsein die ästhetische Welt.

Die objektive Welt ist nur die ursprüngliche, noch bewußtlose Poesie des Geistes; das allgemeine Organon der Philosophie – und der Schlußstein ihres ganzen Gewölbes – *die Philosophie der Kunst*. (AS I, 417)

The aesthetic is the only activity within consciousness that also demonstrates its identity with the unconscious, resulting in a product that presents the two together equitably.

Thus the product exhibits the ideal of design while presenting a real product in the world, and Schelling here embraces the paradoxical aspect of aesthetic experience in that it includes both subjective and objective qualities without reduction. Instead of siding with the empiricists or the rationalists about whether to locate aesthetic experience in the subjective or objective, Schelling takes the position that such experience is in between the two. This is why he considers philosophy of art as the general tool of philosophy, since it brings the activity of philosophy into the world of space and time.

Schelling expands on this issue of art being the organon of philosophy in §4 of the “Einleitung” and why, given the nature of intellectual intuition, art is the necessary culmination of this activity in order to establish itself in tangible form. Given that transcendental philosophy looks only to the subjective as its immediate object of study, it must avoid any admixture of the objective. This is why Schelling turns to intellectual intuition in the *STI*, since he stipulates that intellectual intuition is the inner sense that remains when we remove any influence or determination of outer sense. Given the absence of objectivity, the philosophical concepts produced by intellectual intuition are freely produced because they are determined only by the laws of the intellect that has turned in on itself, thus allowing it a space of free play.<sup>33</sup> Even mathematical concepts are excluded from this activity of philosophizing, since mathematical figures are determined by the laws perceived through outer sense. Thus, activity within

---

<sup>33</sup> In “Reason at Play: The Place of Schellingian Childishness in the *Phenomenology’s* Dialectic of Reason”, Chris Lauer attempts to develop Hegel’s critique of Schelling on the grounds that this withdrawal of reason into pure subjectivity as “free play”, although taken seriously by reason, allows reason to become self-absorbed to the point it ignores the world and others. Lauer is quick to qualify this project by noting that this may not be a fair depiction of Schelling, but I will indicate in later parts why I think Schelling’s appeal to the aesthetic solves the issues that Hegel raises.

transcendental philosophy is intentionally kept empty, and he establishes two conditions that we must always observe:

... *erstens*, daß man in einer beständigen inneren Tätigkeit, in einem beständigen Produzieren jener ursprünglichen Handlungen der Intelligenz, *zweitens*, daß man in beständiger Reflexion auf dieses Produzieren begriffen, mit einem Wort, daß man immer zugleich das Angeschauete (Produzierende) und das Anschauende sei. (AS I, 418-9).

Philosophy, by the very conditions set up by Schelling, must remain an inner activity and turned away from the world. As such, the Ego is allowed to produce its concepts freely according to its own laws within consciousness. However, since such activity is empty of objective content, the differentiations and tensions it produces vanish as soon as cognition turns towards the world again. Not only is transcendental philosophy never translated from the ideal to the real, the results of its activity would vanish in the eternal emptiness of inner sense. Thus art becomes an important tool for philosophy to express this activity, preserving the productivity of this free play into a tangible object in space and time that can reflect back the culmination of transcendental activity.<sup>34</sup>

I argue that this separation of art and transcendental philosophy solves two problems for Schelling, preemptively addressing criticisms that have been directed at his early philosophy more generally: 1) it allows Schelling's use of intellectual intuition

---

<sup>34</sup> In Chapter 3 of *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* ("The History of Consciousness and the Truth of Art"), Andrew Bowie provides an interesting account of the emptiness of transcendental philosophy and how the artwork serves as a material "trace" of this activity. However, Bowie doesn't go further than this function in his discussion of the *STI*, which I will explain further on that the artwork is more than a mere trace of intellectual activity. For instance, such an account fails to distinguish the artwork from an artefact, which Schelling does differentiate.

without necessarily violating Kant's reasons for excluding it from critical philosophy and 2) it prevents his absolute from collapsing into an undifferentiated whole as Hegel criticizes later in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. With regards to the first problem, some have been sceptical<sup>35</sup> of Schelling's use of intellectual intuition since Kant argued that such an intuition was not a faculty that creatures of our cognition possess. Having such a faculty would mean that we are able to grasp and represent something that is outside of space and time, and the very act of intuiting in such a manner would create its own object. Such a faculty is only possessed by the divine, and the assumption that we have such a faculty undermines the limits set by critical philosophy. In addition, some scholars express the concern that Kant had foreclosed the move of separating the subjective from the objective as Schelling does with transcendental cognition, since Kant argues against Descartes that the empirical "I" is impossible to grasp intellectually without objective content to arrange within the inner sense. If these concerns are correct, Schelling is merely slipping back into dogmatic philosophy in these initial moves of the *STI*.

However, since Schelling separates out transcendental philosophy and art, where transcendental philosophy remains in the ideal while art is the instrument of philosophy in the real, I think Schelling found a way to appeal to intellectual intuition while staying within the limits of Kant's critical insights. As Michelle Kosch points out in *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, Schelling does not conceptualize intellectual intuition in the *STI* as some divine faculty (at least in the way that we possess it). In particular, the intellectual intuition that is described does not provide us with

---

<sup>35</sup> For example, Beiser raises these concerns in *German Idealism*, questioning both Schelling and Fichte in regards to their appeal to intellectual intuition (474-5).

particulars of the world, but rather provides us with general features of the world through our constructive powers without the use of experience. Schelling asserts that a constructive faculty is needed, since Kant appeals to such a faculty when explaining the transcendental unity of apperception and would have no other means of being aware of such a moment if he didn't appeal to intellectual intuition (Kosch 72). Without such an intuition of the intellect, it seems problematic to assert an awareness of how the inner sense of time comes together in the first place.<sup>36</sup> Yet he separates the real out from the ideal by allocating the real to art, and this allows Schelling to maintain the critical point against Descartes that one cannot make the inner sense into substance because the pure subjectivity that we find in transcendental philosophy is mere activity. This activity only becomes an "object" in the sense that we turn our focus towards it, creating a tension within consciousness as it maintains the delicate dance of acting and perceiving its action, but no substance of this activity remains in the ideal. Given this, Schelling then turns to art to be our canvas in the real for this ideal activity to be impressed upon, providing a product of the Ego's productivity and preventing the loss of the tension before the activity of transcendental philosophy ceases. Although intellectual intuition doesn't

---

<sup>36</sup> Eckart Förster provides in *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy* a detailed history of how the concept of intellectual developed from Kant to Schelling through Fichte. In particular, he highlights how Kant differentiated intellectual intuition from intuitive understanding as two different faculties of the divine. The latter is possible because the divine can reflect on the totality of the world, thus seeing how the parts are necessary in that whole. Intellectual intuition, which is the coincidence of thinking and being, is possible in that the divine knows the world through thinking because he is aware of his creation of these things in the world (144-5). Fichte picks this up and modifies it to also include the transcendental apperception, since the "I" becomes aware of its activity of creating itself, and thus in this limited form achieves intellectual intuition (162-3). Thus, Schelling takes up this modified form of intellectual intuition when discussing it in the *STI*.

generate substance in this finite mode, it is a reflective awareness of the Ego as self-generating activity.

Yet Schelling is able to move forward by looking at intellectual intuition in the *STI* because he is not committed to the dualism between Nature and Ego that Kant maintains. Schelling states that his goal is to establish a single principle that grounds both theoretical and practical philosophy within the limits of critical philosophy, thus having a science of knowledge (*AS I*, 422), so it may seem odd at first that he should turn to what seems to be a faculty so removed from the real. Yet Schelling resituates the problem so that we can see that studying intellectual intuition is not useless when wanting to understand nature. As Kosch points out, Schelling doesn't assume that the philosophical problem of freedom is about "freedom from nature", but rather "was freedom in nature" (77). This is because Schelling does not position humans above nature to establish rational self-determination, but rather argues that humans have developed a degree of self-consciousness of their own activity that was carried out unconsciously before. Therefore, intellectual intuition is not some divine intuition that creates the world *ex nihilo* in this context, but rather it is the intuition of reason's activity that is accessible to us because we are part of the rational activity that produces the world that we are embedded in. As such, we are given some assurance, within critical limits of being finite, that our mental representations are connected to the world because our minds are a natural product that follow the dynamics of what it had emerged out of.

In denying Kant's move of setting our rationality above nature, Schelling thinks that the inflexible limits that Kant established on human knowledge in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* are themselves subjectively dogmatic. Although it is important for critical

philosophy to establish for itself the limits of what it knows, providing a definitive limit of what one can possibly know is already revealing overconfidence, which is stating before experience what we can or cannot know from experience and reflection. Thus, although Kant is correct in establishing limits within his critique of reason, the fact that such limits are posited subjectively means that 1) consciousness must have some ability to go beyond the limit to even perceive it (which will be discussed more in depth shortly) and 2) they must be mutable as consciousness changes. Additionally, since we are nature becoming conscious of itself, it is reasonable with this premise to assert that as we become conscious of the internal activity of the intellect, inflected by such dynamics is also the activity of nature itself. Yet in stating that the activity of philosophy is made possible only by intellectual intuition, it is possible to argue that Schelling does not violate Kant's critique, since such activity within transcendental philosophy doesn't produce any knowledge as long as no substantial object is presented. As he states: "das Selbstbewußtsein ist uns nicht eine Art des *Seins*, sondern eine Art des *Wissens*, und zwar die höchste und äußerste, die es überhaupt für uns gibt" (AS I, 424). By Kant's own system, we are not concerned about existence when we delve into transcendental philosophy, but only the activity of knowing. We are not studying something static or mechanical like a material object. As Beiser points out in *German Idealism*, Schelling and Hegel both see Kant as being held back by a dogmatic view of reason that analogizes it with the mechanical, ironically not seeing how his own critique should have freed him from such static ways of seeing intellectual activity (Beiser 581-2). This mechanical form of reasoning is seen as a subset operation of reason, known as *Verstand*, but reason as a whole has a dynamic character that makes the limits of what we can know mutable.

However, the study of this activity itself is unable to generate any knowledge, since nothing that is studied is presented in space and time. As long as intellectual intuition does not produce knowledge, its use in transcendental philosophy shouldn't violate Kant's system because it merely gives us insight into the ideal. Although Beiser characterizes such an insight as "self-knowledge" (*German Idealism* 583), we must be careful with this label, since the mutability of the "self" prevents us from actually having any "self-knowledge" at all in the Kantian sense. Such is the price of practical philosophy as we try to gain awareness of our own activity.

Thus, the aesthetic serves as an important tool for philosophy to present this activity in the real, impressing it into material so that we can study the trace of it as an object in time and space. However, we must be careful here in not assuming that because the *STI* ends with discussing art in this manner that art is necessarily "higher" than philosophy. This reading is asserted, for example, by Beiser in *German Idealism* and Bowie in *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, which both state that art had for a short time sovereignty over philosophy due to its ability to reveal the absolute (Beiser 585; Bowie 45). This interpretation then asserts that Schelling quickly abandons this hierarchy, and that Schelling restores philosophy as "higher" than art. These interpretations that try to create such a hierarchy between art and philosophy seems to distort the very interdependence that Schelling seems to be establishing in the *STI*, where art and philosophy don't need to be ranked because they serve in an organic unity rather than a mechanical one. As such, each part of the unity is defined by its relationship by the other, forming an interdependence that makes it difficult to give any one part priority. For one thing, as much as Schelling talks about art as an organon of transcendental

philosophy, he still seems to refer to a *philosophy* of art at the end, and it isn't the case that the aesthetic by itself reveals the absolute that is within it. It is clear that Schelling thinks that transcendental philosophy lacks this ability to instantiate its activity in the real, but to separate philosophy as a whole from art is already setting limits around philosophy that Schelling refuses to make, since such limits are making conclusions before our investigation is complete. He states in Part I of the *STI*:

Das Selbstbewußtsein ist der lichte Punkt im ganzen System des Wissens, der aber nur vorwärts, nicht rückwärts leuchtet. – Selbst zugegeben, daß dieses Selbstbewußtsein nur die Modifikation eines von ihm unabhängigen Seins wäre, was freilich keine Philosophie begreiflich machen kann, so ist es für mich jetzt keine Art des Seins, sondern eine *Art des Wissens*, und *nur in dieser Qualität betrachte ich es hier.* (AS I, 425)

He immediately adds after that:

Die einzig mögliche Einwendung dagegen ist die, daß die so bestimmte Aufgabe nicht Aufgabe der Philosophie, ihre Auflösung nicht Philosophie sei.

Allein was Philosophie *sei*, ist eben die bis jetzt unausgemachte Frage, deren Beantwortung nur Resultat der Philosophie selbst sein kann. *Daß* die Auflösung dieser Aufgabe Philosophie sei, kann nur durch die Tat selbst beantwortet werden, *dadurch, daß man zugleich mit dieser Aufgabe alle die Probleme auflöst, die man von jeher in der Philosophie aufzulösen suchte.* (AS I, 426)

Transcendental philosophy, as it reflects on self-consciousness, can only look forward to solving its concern about the science of knowledge, but this fact alone entails that philosophy cannot decide definitively its form and content. This has been one of the mistakes dogmatic philosophers made that critical philosophy is trying to amend. Although dogmatic philosophers presume to be able to identify what is a philosophical issue or not, Schelling recognizes that part of what constitutes critical philosophy is not setting predetermined boundaries before the inquiry is completed. If issues surface during a philosophical inquiry, it is for that reason that they are seen as philosophical issues. Thus, to interpret art as separate from philosophy as a whole rather than making it a part of philosophy is already moving forward dogmatically, and it is clear that in referring to art as a “tool” means that he is interested in how art can render the absolute intelligible as a form of philosophy. Although transcendental philosophy is limited to the ideal and *Naturphilosophie* is limited to the real, philosophy is able to use art to explore the interstice between these two domains. It also provides philosophy with material traces of ideal activity, thus providing some aspect of the activity in space and time to be studied without the use of intellectual intuition. Yet, given that art is distinct from transcendental philosophy, this translation of the ideal over to the real does not dissolve the tension that is generated between the two sides.

As much as Schelling wants to highlight how aesthetic activity becomes an instrument for relating the ideal activity into the real, it is also important that activity maintains some level of autonomy in its role so that it doesn't collapse into this function for transcendental philosophy. In doing so, I believe Schelling has anticipated the second problem generated by Hegel after the two philosophers part ways. In positing the Ego as

an act of thought of itself, we see a significant influence from the *Sturm und Drang* movement, where the “Ich” is no longer thought of as given, but rather actively created. Yet, as was stated earlier, this mere identity relation of the Ego and the thought of itself is problematic in that it will collapse in that very identity. Hegel makes this very criticism of Schelling’s philosophy in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, stating in the Vorrede that “im Absoluten Alles gleich ist, der unterscheidenden und erfüllen oder Erfüllung suchenden und fodernden Erkenntnis entgegensetzen, - oder sein Absolutes für die Nacht auszugeben, worin, wie man zu sagen pflegt, alle Kühe schwarz sind, ist die Naivität der Leere an Erkenntnis” (13). Hegel’s charge is that Schelling does not adequately explain the splitting of the absolute spirit into the Ego and unconscious Nature, which the focus of the *STI* is the bridging of the real and ideal through the proposition of “I”=“I”. What emerges is a self-consciousness that is an object to itself, where this consciousness is limited, and thus exists finitely, and in fact limits itself. What is crucial in this project is somehow keeping this tension alive within the system while keeping the idea of the absolute as a coherent concept. If this tension collapses, then Hegel’s objection is valid. If the tension fractures, then we find ourselves in an absolute idealism like Fichte’s where we are confined within the subject.

Schelling is quite aware of this issue in the *STI* when he addresses the nature of the Ego in relation to its own limitations within the real, and his appeal to the aesthetic is an attempt to keep this tension alive. Limitation plays a crucial role in how self-consciousness exists for Schelling, since it is the very play of the limit that brings consciousness to light, therefore refuting the idea that we cannot think beyond the limits of the reason:

5. Diese dritte, zwischen der begrenzten und der begrenzenden schwebende Tätigkeit, durch welche das Ich erst entsteht, ist, weil Produzieren und Sein vom Ich *eins* ist, nichts anderes als das *Ich des Selbstbewußtseins selbst*.

*Das Ich ist also selbst eine zusammengesetzte Tätigkeit, das Selbstbewußtsein selbst ein synthetischer Akt. (AS I, 459)*

What Schelling emphasizes here is that self-consciousness is dependent on the limit to generate its ambiguous existence between the real and the ideal, and the project is to identify the site where the Ego can play between these two sides of itself. Although intellectual intuition is spontaneous and infinite subjectivity, completely abstracted from the objective, the limit is a constitutive part of self-consciousness because it is otherwise incapable of rendering itself as an object introspectively. As subject, the Ego is pervasive in consciousness with every determination, and thus can be infinite within this view. Yet it is essential for the concept of “object” that it is finite and within boundaries, otherwise it cannot be grasped by consciousness. The object cannot be represented otherwise. Thus, for consciousness to be in the position of grasping any sense of itself, there must be a limit to render itself temporarily as a finite determination. Schelling wants to emphasize that the infinite Ego as subject *becomes* a finite object known as the Ego when it achieves self-consciousness. Recognizing Spinoza’s insights about the limits of our conceptual understanding, Schelling states:

Alles Bestimmen aber setzt voraus ein absolut Unbestimmtes (z.B. jede geometrische Figur den unendlichen Raum), jede Bestimmung ist also Aufhebung der absoluten Realität, d.h. Negation.

Aber Negation eines Positiven ist nicht möglich durch bloße Privation, sondern allein durch *reelle Entgegensetzung* (z.B.  $1+0=1$ ,  $1-1=0$ ). (AS I, 449)

For the understanding to grasp an object, it must negate the absolute infinity that the object exists in. Yet if we are to posit the Ego as a real infinite, as Fichte does, then what is negating it must also be real and independent of the Ego. Consciousness thus finds itself in an interesting tension that it must play with, making a mechanical conception of consciousness unworkable. In terms of “mechanical”, I refer back to my discussion on Schiller that contrasts the mechanical and the organic, where a mechanical whole is one where the parts can exist separate from the whole. Although a gear serves a specific function within the operating clock, it still can exist outside of the clock without altering what it is. Yet a mechanical understanding of consciousness within nature is not able to provide an account of self-consciousness, since mechanics can just expand forever without a need for a limit. As Beiser points out in *German Idealism*, Schelling already shifts away from the mechanical understanding of physics in his *Naturphilosophie*, adopting Kant’s theory of matter in the 1786 *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften* that what is fundamental to matter is not extension but rather force (Beiser 513). The reason why force is better at explaining finite bodies, rather than the Cartesian theory that uses extension, is that extension can go on infinitely without encountering opposition. Force, on the other hand, requires that it encounters at least one other force for it to be instantiated, and thus rendered in its very concept as finite. Thus what renders a determinate body for consciousness is the balance of forces, reducing

down into two kinds: repulsion and attraction.<sup>37</sup> Rejected by this conception is the idea that these forces must inhere in something substantial, a mistake that Descartes made with both the mind and the body (Beiser 513-4). At the very ground of physics, therefore, all matter is conceptually dependent on the opposition of forces rather than the existence of separable parts. This dynamic mode of thinking then moves up in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, where Nature is conceived of as an organic totality, but one that is unable to achieve consciousness of its productivity. Even finite conscious beings cannot perceive Nature's productivity, but rather speculate its existence through the products that result from the determination of forces at play.

One of the key points that emerges in "Allgemeine Deduktion des transzendentalen Idealismus" is that, as we shift from *Naturphilosophie* to transcendental philosophy, the tension within his dynamic model must be maintained in order to sustain self-consciousness. The highest achievement for nature is the organism, which is purposive because it is a level of self-organization that is also self-generating, but it is not purposive in its production because it arises from forces that are unconscious (*AS I*, 675-6). We shift into transcendental philosophy once self-consciousness arises, and inherent in this is the tension mentioned earlier of intellectual activity becoming its own object. If this tension collapses and we arrive at a product of the determination after this collapse, there is not much difference between Nature and Ego in that the consciousness of the productivity is dissolved when the activity ceases. In order for self-consciousness to sustain itself, it must produce without collapsing into a clear determination, and thus places itself in the state of becoming (i.e. located between objective being and subjective

---

<sup>37</sup> This is also a fundamental point in Schelling's *Von der Weltseele* of 1798.

nothingness). To maintain this state of becoming, self-consciousness must limit itself momentarily while maintaining its expansion out to infinity. Thus, he puts forth the proposition that contains two important conditions of self-consciousness:

Daß die ursprünglich unendliche Tätigkeit des Ichs sich selbsts begrenze, d.h. in eine endliche verwandle (in Selbstbewußtsein), ist nur dann begreiflich, wenn sich bewesen läßt, *daß das Ich als Ich unbegrenzt sein kann, nur insofern es begrenzt ist, und umgekehrt, daß es als Ich begrenzt, nur insofern es unbegrenzt ist.* (AS I, 450)

The first part of this proposition, which he labels proposition A (“*das Ich als Ich unbegrenzt sein kann, nur insofern es begrenzt ist*”), is a necessary proposition because without limitation, the infinite that we are discussing could not be an Ego. As was stated earlier, Ego must render itself as a finite object in order for it to even grasp itself, since objects of consciousness must have clear boundaries to make it a distinct thing. As Schelling points out in section aa), an Ego that does not have this limitation is like infinite space, extending out endlessly without being able to turn inwards. Such a consciousness is not an Ego, since it is dissolved into its infinity before it can ever become self-aware. It requires a finite reflection in order to return to itself (AS I, 451). Yet he notes that we are then in danger of falling into contradiction when the Ego is rendered as a finite object while it is suppose to be infinite at the same time. Thus, Schelling emphasizes that the Ego doesn’t intuit itself as a finite being, but rather as “infinite becoming” (*unendliches Werden*) in section bb). Implicit in the concept of becoming is limitation, since the infinite activity of the Ego would immediately generate its product if there were no resistance or opposition (*Widerstand*). Such a product would

be a being (*ein Sein*) rather than a becoming (*ein Werden*), and it would exist as immediately complete without changing in time. This would render the Ego as a static, finite object. However, since this becoming is also infinite, it must be possible for the limit (*die Schranke*) to be abolished (*aufgehoben*) and not abolished at the same time.<sup>38</sup> If the limit cannot be exceeded in this manner, then the activity will eventually complete its product and the becoming ceases. As Schelling puts it, “Wenn die produzierende Tätigkeit nicht über ihr Produkt (Ihre Schranke) hinausstrebt, so ist das Produkt nicht produktiv, d.h. es ist kein Werden” (AS I, 451). Thus the activity must produce a product that will continue to be productive beyond itself in order for us to sustain self-consciousness. The Ego doesn’t render itself once as an object, but rather it keeps rendering new permutations of itself at each point of self-intuition. Thus, the apparent contradiction that Schelling brought up earlier is avoided if we understand that there is an infinite extension of the limit (*einer unendlichen Erweiterung der Schranke*) by which self-consciousness is constantly making new determinations of the Ego (AS I, 452).

The second important condition of Schelling’s claim, proposition B (“... *als Ich begrenzt, nur insofern es unbegrenzt ist*”) is to argue again for the importance of the Ego having consciousness beyond the limit that it posits upon itself. What Schelling is

---

<sup>38</sup> As Dale Snow emphasizes in *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, the discussion of the limit being abolished and not abolished at the same time indicates that Schelling’s form of history is a recognition of “freedom as a drama uniting freedom and necessity, subjective and objective elements, in a way which is and must remain less than transparent” (122), and thus the Ego moves beyond it without a clear determination of this conflict. As such, we must not equate this to Hegel’s concept of “Aufheben” despite their similarities, since Snow suggests that the advance of reason is not necessarily the focus for Schelling. Before Snow, Jean-François Marquet also argued along similar lines in *Liberté et existence*, arguing that Schelling’s work continuously brought about this conflict of our freedom of action and being in the world, with Schelling recognizing that no philosophical totality could be achieved within a critical philosophy.

arguing here is that not only does the infinite Ego require a limit in order to not become dispersed into infinity, but also that the Ego must push up against and think past the limit for there to even be a limit. If the Ego does not have this relationship with the limit due to its own infinity, then we couldn't even conceptualize this edge as a limit in the first place. Just like an animal that doesn't realize its captivity until it runs up against the fence and sees beyond it, the Ego could not recognize its rendering of itself as a finite object until its thinking can push against and conceive past this finite rendering of itself. In order to locate itself as a point in space and time, consciousness must be able to conceive of the space outside of itself to make the delineation even possible. What is of importance to Schelling here is the tension generated by critical philosophy when it posits a limit of knowing upon the Ego, which Kant did in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* when he established a permanent boundary between what reason can and cannot know. On the one hand, the establishment of this boundary is essential for critical philosophy in order to make the Ego aware of its current activity and its limits as it engages with the real. Yet, as Schelling stated earlier about philosophers who try to declare what is philosophy before the end of the investigation, it is impossible for us to establish this boundary as eternal without becoming dogmatic about this assertion. Thus the paradox that was generated by Kant's noumena, in which we know of something that conceptually is defined as something we cannot know, is a symptom of the inadequacy of his mechanical conception of reason and the inflexibility of the boundary he posits. A dynamic conception of reason, on the other hand, avoids this dogmatism by recognizing that when reason posits a limit to establish the Ego, it must also be capable of pushing against it in order to even have this critical function. If the Ego is in a state of infinite becoming, it

must be constantly recognizing its finite condition and overcoming itself. In order to preserve this as a tension, and thus generate self-consciousness, Schelling argues that the limit must be conceived as both real and ideal at the same time. The limit must be real, or else it would not be conceivable that the Ego could act upon it. A purely ideal limit would not provide resistance, and thus self-awareness is dependent upon the Ego's encounter with the non-Ego, or Nature. Yet the limit must also be ideal in that the Ego is aware of it as a limit, or else the Ego is not capable of distinguishing itself from the non-Ego in the real. Thus, in order to maintain the critical element of transcendental philosophy and the self-consciousness it generates, the dynamic tensions generated by intellectual activity<sup>39</sup> must not be collapsed into final determinations. Once the tension collapses, becoming ceases, and the consciousness that was generated by the resistance will also turn lifeless and dogmatic. Thus, Parts Three and Four of the *STI* utilize this dynamic model to discuss how theoretical and practical philosophy have developed throughout history, acknowledging the temporal dimensions of reason as it emerged from the unconscious activity of Nature towards its grasp of both necessity and freedom. Yet he ultimately turns to art, or more specifically aesthetic activity, in the last part of the *STI* as the final culmination of transcendental philosophy.

Thus, I argue that Schelling's turn to aesthetic activity as the culmination of transcendental philosophy answers Hegel's critique of his philosophy turning into a vacuous absolute because the artwork not only serves as a real trace of ideal activity, but it also maintains the very tension between the ideal and the real. As was already stated,

---

<sup>39</sup> Specifically referenced here are the tensions between theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy, the conscious and unconscious, the real and the ideal, Nature and the Ego, etc.

Schelling characterizes the major tensions within transcendental philosophy as forming between theoretical and practical philosophy, where once we gain certainty in one direction, we lose certainty of the other. Thus, if we gain certainty of the natural world within theoretical philosophy, we lose certainty in practical philosophy because we dissolve our agency in the passive representation of how the natural products are arranged and interacting in the world. Yet, as soon as we act and gain certainty within practical philosophy in regards to our freedom, we lose certainty within theoretical philosophy because our actions change the configuration of the natural world, and we cannot fully grasp the consequences of these changes.<sup>40</sup> Rather than harmonize these two sides of philosophy, as Schiller aimed to do, Schelling decides to maintain the dynamic that generates internal resistance within the absolute. Schelling has already stated in the “Einleitung” that aesthetic activity is the only conscious activity that exhibits the identity of consciousness and the unconscious, but he is clearer in his elaboration in Part Six of the *STI* that this exhibition does not entail that the tension between these two sides of the absolute is resolved as they are presented together, nor is one subjugated to the priority of the other.

---

<sup>40</sup> As Bernard Williams explains in an interview with Bryan Magee in the BBC television series *The Great Philosophers*, Descartes’ move to separate body and mind did serve an important function for Newtonian mechanics, which it ensured theoretically that conscious mind could not interfere in our mathematical calculations of the physical laws governing unconscious matter. Thus Descartes’ dualism was an attempt to dissolve the very tension that Schelling wants to preserve, making it a dogmatic philosophy by Schelling’s definition. For the transcripts of the interview with Bernard Williams, see “Dialogue 4: Descartes” in *The Great Philosophers: An Introduction to Western Philosophy* by Bryan Magee.

The importance of aesthetic activity and its product is that it marks the return to the unconscious, and thus it shows that transcendental philosophy finishes its movement by going in the opposite direction of *Naturphilosophie*. Thus he states:

Kürzer: die Natur fängt bewußtlos an und endet bewußt, die Produktion ist nicht zweckmäßig, wohl aber das Produkt. Das Ich in der Tätigkeit, von welcher hier die Rede ist, muß mit Bewußtsein (subjektiv) anfangen, und im Bewußtlosen oder *objektiv* enden, das Ich ist bewußt der Produktion nach, bewußtlos in Ansehung des Produkts. (AS I, 681)

Schelling has already argued in Part Three of the *STI* that organic nature marks a significant shift in the natural world, since it exhibits organization, i.e. the organic product has a relation to itself so that it is both its cause and effect. Thus, although Nature itself remains invisible to consciousness, we get a glimpse of the cosmos (*Universum*) because it reflects the ground characteristic of life: self-organization. While providing the deduction of the organic, he states: “Die Organisation ist nur die in Grenzen eingeschlossene und als fixiert vorgestellte Sukzession. Der Ausdruck der organischen Gestalt ist Ruhe, obgleich dieses beständige Reproduziertwerden der ruhenden Gestalt nur durch einen kontinuierlichen inneren Wechsel möglich ist” (AS I, 559). He then follows up with what characterizes organic nature specifically:

Der Grundcharakter der Organisation ist also, daß sie mit sich selbst in Wechselwirkung, Produzierendes und Produkt zugleich sei, welcher Begriff Prinzip aller organischen Naturlehre ist, aus welchem alle weiteren Bestimmungen der Organisation a priori abgeleitet werden können. (AS I, 563)

Nature unconsciously generates tensions within itself to bring about a differentiation of parts, but still maintains a reciprocity amongst those parts to maintain a unity. This activity must be maintained within a limit that is constantly changing, since 1) without that limit Nature would disperse out into infinity (thus the parts would not need to interact) and 2) it must be constantly changing to keep Nature from settling into a lifeless determination of forces. This is a mirror of what we saw occurring within self-consciousness, except that Nature does not achieve consciousness until it generates the Ego. Thus the organic product displays a similar dynamic as the work of art, but the finite Ego looks back at the products of nature to assign teleological judgements upon them. Although the production of the organic product is unconscious, the product reflects a sense of consciousness because Ego has emerged from Nature and can impose a sense of design after the fact. As such, consciousness of the productivity becomes essential to mark this opposite movement from Ego to the Nature: “Bewußte und bewußtlose Tätigkeit sollen absolut *eins* sein im Produkt, gerade wie sie es im organischen Produkt auch sind, aber sie sollen auf andere Art *eines* sein, beide sollen *eines* seine *für das Ich selbst*. Dies ist aber unmöglich, als wenn das Ich sich der Produktion bewußt ist” (AS I 682). To move in reverse, as Schelling suggests, we must arrive at a product that was consciously produced, but still exhibits the unconscious, i.e. some part of the artwork leaves the purview of the very consciousness that produced it. It is in this manner that Schelling thinks that the tension, as it remains in the organic product when moving from the unconscious to the conscious, maintains itself in the artwork.

This element of the unconscious becomes integral to Schelling's normative definition of aesthetic activity, which the artwork must remain theoretically indeterminate at the end of its production. If we can arrive at a defined set of determinations of a product, then the tensions within the product become resolved and the freedom that we could see reflected through the artwork vanishes:

Aller Trieb zu produzieren, steht mit der Vollendung des Produkts stille, alle Widersprüche sind aufgehoben, alle Rätsel gelöst. Da die Produktion ausgegangen war von Freiheit, d.h. von einer unendlichen Entgegensetzung der beiden Tätigkeiten, so wird die Intelligenz jene absolute Vereinigung beider, in welcher die Produktion endet, nicht der *Freiheit* zuschreiben können, denn gleichzeitig mit der Vollendung des Produkts ist alle Erscheinung der Freiheit hinweggenommen; sie wird sich durch jene Vereinigung selbst überrischt und *beglückt* fühlen, d.h. sie gleichsam als freiwillige Gunst einer höheren Natur ansehen, die das Unmögliche durch sie möglich gemacht hat. (AS I 683)

Once the contradiction within the product is resolved, it becomes lifeless. Thus the appearances of freedom will also vanish from it, leaving a product that appears to be produced out of the necessity of the conditions that came before it. This means that theoretical reason can then dissect this object into a finite set of determinations to explain its cause and function. Although it cannot be completely obscure to theoretical reason (since such a product would not show up as an object for thought), the artwork does need to avoid this collapse of the contradiction that sustains it to accurately reflect aesthetic activity. Otherwise, it becomes subsumed by consciousness. Schelling is explicit that

*Kunst* (“art” or “artistry”) and *Poesie* (“poetry”) are two separate activities that are present in the artwork, *Kunst* being the conscious activity that imparts technique and *Poesie* being the unconscious activity of creating from within one’s inner organization.

Without both, Schelling states that we do not arrive at the artwork:

... die Poesie, selbst wo sie angeboren ist, ohne die Kunst nur gleichsam tote Produkte hervorbringt, an welchen kein menschlicher Verstand sich ergötzen kann, und welche durch die völlige blinde Kraft, die darin wirksam ist, alles Urteil und selbst die Anschauung von sich zurückstoßen... [Poesie ohne Kunst] immer nur ein Schein von Poesie entstehen kann, der an seiner Oberflächlichkeit im Gegensatz gegen die unergründliche Tiefe, welche der wahre Künstler, obwohl er mit der größten Besonnenheit arbeitet, unwillkürlich in sein Werk legt, und welche weder er noch irgend ein anderer ganz zu durchdringen vermag, so wie an vielen anderen Merkmalen, z.B. dem großen Wert, den er auf das bloß Mechanische der Kunst legt, an der Armut der Form, in welcher er sich bewegt, usw. leicht unterscheidbar ist. (AS I, 686-7).

Just as Schiller refuses to reduce the aesthetic into either the form or the matter of the artwork, Schelling argues that the conscious activity of *Kunst* and the unconscious activity of *Poesie* are distinct in such a way that they can produce on their own without arriving at the artwork. Thus, *Poesie* without the conscious activity of *Kunst* is merely the production of Nature, since it produces without being conscious of its own production. However, *Kunst* without the unconscious activity of *Poesie* falls short of aesthetic production because it produces an artifact easily understood by consciousness,

and thus it lacks the tensions that allow us to glimpse into the absolute. Just like a tool or a generic living room decoration, this product is the conscious form that we have extracted from artworks before, and the finitude of this organization collapses the tension that draws my attention in the case of the aesthetic. Schelling can thus point to the various objects that surround us that are products of the artisan, but the artist must include this element of the unconscious for there to be aesthetic activity.

Therefore, the artwork is constructed in such a way that no viewpoint has a total understanding of it, since even the producer, although conscious of the process, isn't fully aware of all that is contained within her own work. Schelling states that this is evident when we take into account the artist's perspective of the process, where one is not fully aware of all the inner forces that make the artist create a particular work. Instead, it is described merely as a drive to create, and the artist then uses the techniques of consciousness at her disposal to impress this unconscious drive upon unconscious matter. Although the artist is conscious of the production, the unconscious inspiration is a necessary part of the work to have life. Thus Schelling explicitly establishes that this tension, the contradiction, is the essential part of the artwork once it is instantiated in the real, and it explains the ambiguity as to whether the qualities of the artwork are subjective or objective:

Der Grundcharakter des Kunstwerks ist also eine *bewußtlose Unendlichkeit*. Der Künstler scheint in seinem Werk außer dem, was er mit offener Absicht darein gelegt hat, instinktmäßig gleichsam eine Unendlichkeit dargestellt zu haben, welche ganz zu entwickeln kein endlicher Verstand fähig ist. Um uns nur durch ein Beispiel deutlich zu

machen, so ist die griechische Mythologie, von der es unleugbar ist, daß sie einen unendlichen Sinn und Symbole für alle Ideen in sich schließt, unter einem Volk und auf eine Weise entstanden, welche beide eine durchgängige Absichtlichkeit in der Erfindung und in der Harmonie, mit der alles zu *einem* großen Ganzen vereinigt ist, unmöglich annehmen lassen. (AS I 687-8)

If we cannot rely on the artist or those of the surrounding culture as viewpoints that can achieve a complete understanding of an artwork, then it is reasonable to assume that no viewpoint can achieve a complete understanding of it. What I find interesting about Schelling's approach is that it does allow us to extract a partial understanding of the artwork through theoretical reason, but it also preserves the tension between the Ego and Nature that makes freedom appear in the real, since the certainty of practical reason (represented through freedom) requires a loss of certainty in theoretical reason. The artist moves forward with intention, and thus can contribute our understanding of the artwork, but even her conscious testimony fails to grasp all of the possible meanings and effects that can come from it. For example, the artist doesn't know exactly how her productivity will fully manifest and endure in the real, nor anticipate all of the theoretical interpretations generated by her work as it is circulated in the community. The unconscious side of art doesn't just merely reflect our conscious work back to us, but it rather makes us return to the uncertainties that consciousness has fenced off in its attempts to understand the world theoretically. Practical philosophy, in culminating into art, must dive into the unconscious where the theoretical is no longer able to have certainty. Thus, unlike aesthetic theories that privileges the consciousness of the

spectator, the artist, the art world, etc., Schelling's approach to the aesthetic avoids putting any perspective in a privileged position, while acknowledging that each finite consciousness has some partial grasp of the art object. Although there is essentially no point at which one viewpoint can become the standard for all other viewpoints, the art object can still serve as a middle ground between these people because it still presents itself in the real.

Another result that arises from Schelling's artwork is that it encourages the Ego to overcome itself, since the aesthetic product indicates to consciousness that there is something existing outside its current limit. As Schelling noted earlier, consciousness must feel resistance before it can turn inward towards itself, otherwise it will keep moving outward without becoming self-aware. The resistance of the Ego running into Nature is such an instance of becoming aware of the limit, and the Ego is then able to delineate a temporary boundary that separates itself out from the surrounding world. However, the artwork provides a different reflection compared to Nature, since the Ego looks at the artwork as its own creation. The fact that one's own creation resists theoretical understanding signals to the Ego that there is also an internal tension, one that prevents self-transparency. Thus, as Dale Snow points out in *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, this confrontation with the unconscious in the artwork brings about the realization the Ego is never able to know itself completely through theoretical or practical reason (139). The artwork serves as a trace of freedom, as Andrew Bowie suggests, but it also is a reminder that the Ego's knowledge of itself is incomplete in regards to its actions in the world and how it views itself. It doesn't have a complete picture of all the conditions that led up to this act of creation, nor does it foresee all the consequences of

this action, thus it comes up against the limit of knowing itself. Thus, although the Ego wants to think of itself as autonomous and infinite, this tension of this internal limit makes it self-aware that parts of itself are hidden. Yet as soon as it becomes aware of this limit within itself, the Ego has overcome its former understanding of itself by seeing the limit and thinking past it. Just as the resistance of Nature makes the Ego retract from its former feelings of omniscience, the resistance provided by the artwork also makes it realize that it isn't even omniscient in regards to its own unconscious.

Thus, it should be rather clear at this point that Schelling's turn to the artwork serves as a preemptive solution to Hegel's criticism of the vacuous absolute, since the artwork prevents the tensions generated within transcendental ideal from collapsing by bringing the tension into the real. Yet it should be noted that it isn't just the trace of this tension either, as Andrew Bowie describes it. As Jason Wirth discusses in *The Conspiracy of Life*, Schelling views the artwork as something that is living through its aporia, and this contradiction is something that consciousness is able to return to at a later time (140-1). Although a determination has been made in bringing the artwork into the real, there is still an indeterminacy that allows us to return to the work to extract new determinations because the contradiction hasn't fully collapsed.<sup>41</sup> For example, Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* is set with its narrative structure that leads to the death of Antigone and the regrets of Creon, and changing this outcome moves away from the original artwork. Yet, even when we know this outcome, many of us are able to read or

---

<sup>41</sup> In "The Potencies of Beauty: Schelling on the Question of Nature and Art", Kyriaki Goudeli argues that the artwork is able to suggest to us the depth of self because it maintains an irritability to reason that other objects fail to generate. This linking of the artwork to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* seems to be a promising direction, but I will remain within his treatments of the artwork within the *STI* for now due to the fact that Schelling argues that aesthetic activity is the culmination of transcendental philosophy.

watch the play with the same tension as we when we first saw it, looking for ways that the disaster could be averted or thinking about where responsibility lies in causing the suffering of the characters. We return to it *as though* the set of events could have been different, thus bringing the tensions of the artwork into the present. As scholars and directors have generated new interpretations of this work, we are able to analyze the decisions of the characters through different lenses, evaluating the conflicts from a viewpoint that was inaccessible to Sophocles when he created the work. Yet these new viewpoints and evaluations would not be possible if the artwork collapsed down into a finite set of determinations, and it is for this reason that the artwork marks the incompleteness of our thoughts about a past decision that moves from the ideal to the real. If this collapse does occur, then the work would no longer be aesthetic and would fall away from consciousness. This prevents the absolute from becoming vacuous, since artworks are a way of reminding us of these tensions that have occurred in the ideal, and thus allow us to return to them after they are instantiated in time.<sup>42</sup>

Given what has been discussed above about the dynamics of the artwork and the problem that Schelling attempts to solve, I argue that Schelling is in fact modifying

---

<sup>42</sup> I do acknowledge that Hegel probably would not think this is a satisfactory response to his criticism, since he could respond with the point that Schelling's absolute is insufficiently constrained in the way he preserves these tensions within. In particular, there are no criteria clear enough for mediating disputes between different viewpoints, and would thus inevitably fall back into dogmatism due to the inability to engage with one another. However, I believe this disagreement reveals one of the fundamental differences of philosophical predisposition between Schelling and Hegel, since Schelling has stated early on in the *STI* that one of the corollaries of critical philosophy is that one cannot know beforehand what a systematic philosophy will look like or if it is even possible. To decide in advance if reconciliation is possible in a dispute is already making dogmatic assertions. Yet Hegel would argue that such grounds towards reconciliation are inherently necessary for philosophy to get off the ground. Thus we see how the two arrive at different philosophical accounts given this point of contention early on.

Schiller's concept of play in the *STI*. Unfortunately, not much focus has been given to the possibility that a concept of play is operating in Schelling's philosophy. One exception is Chris Lauer's "Reason at Play: The Place of Schellingian Childishness in the *Phenomenology's* Dialectic of Reason". However, this article focuses on Hegel's critique of Schelling in that Reason becomes too playful in Schelling's philosophy in that it retreats from world, and this discussion of play in Schelling's work is intended to provide an understanding of Hegel's work (which Lauer notes that this criticism may be an unfair representation of Schelling). It also should be noted that Schelling doesn't explicitly discuss play in the *STI*, although it does seem that play is taking place. It is only later in 1802 in *Die Philosophie der Kunst* that he states:

Wir verlangen für die Vernunft sowohl als für die Einbildungskraft, daß nichts im Universum gedrückt, rein beschränkt und untergeordnet sey.

Wir fordern für jedes Ding ein besonderes und freies Leben. Nur der Verstand ordnet unter, in der Vernunft und in der Einbildungskraft ist alles frei und bewegt sich in dem gleichen Aether, ohne sich zu drängen und zu reiben. Denn jedes für sich ist wieder das Ganze. Der Anblick der reinen Beschränktheit ist von dem untergeordneten Standpunkt aus bald lästig, bald schmerzlich, bald sogar beleidigend, auf jeden Fall widerlich. Für die Vernunft und Phantasie wird auch die begrenzung entweder nur Form des Absoluten oder, als begrenzung aufgefaßt, ein unerschöpflicher Quell des Scherzes und des Spiels, denn mit der Begrenzung zu scherzen ist erlaubt da sie dem Wesen nichts entzieht, an sich bloße Nichtigkeit ist. So spielt

in der griechischen Götterwelt der kühnste Scherz wieder mit den  
Phantasiebildern ihrer Götter... (AS II 221-2)

It here that Schelling is explicit in pointing out that the need for limitation comes from the understanding, while both reason and imagination push against this need to return to the absolute. Thus, although the Greeks divided the absolute into finite representations of gods, reason and imagination played with these divisions to reunite these individual deities into a world that conveyed the reciprocity of all these parts. Thus, to overcome the analytic divisions imposed by the understanding, reason must be able to play with the limit in the manner that Schiller described when one achieves aesthetic semblance.

Also, given what has been discussed above, Schelling provides a dynamic that satisfies the four conditions for my definition of play that I provided in my Introduction. First of all, we do see a boundary within time and space being established consciously in order to separate that space off from infinity, and it is within this activity that the activity of consciousness takes place. This is like Schiller's aesthetic semblance, which demarcates for us a space where we can honestly and dishonestly engage with experience. However, the boundary remains flexible in such a way that consciousness remains aware of itself and can eventually move past this limitation to leave the play space. Second, Schelling maintains that there is an engagement between the Ego and Nature, since this boundary only serves a temporary separation between the ideal and real until the Ego tries to bring itself into the real. The boundary established does not prevent the Ego from investigating Nature, but instead makes it recognize itself as a finite perspective within Nature. Third, Schelling emphasizes the importance of the indeterminacy of this activity, and pushes this even farther than Schiller's concept of

play. Although Schiller argues that one should reach a harmony that is not mechanically predetermined by the forces at play, Schelling maintains that the tension generated by these forces must remain in this knot of infinite contradiction. Finally, Schelling posits an internal motivation for this activity, which the urge to create the artwork does come from within the artist, even if it is an unconscious drive. This internal, infinite striving is an important element that separates out the artwork from other artefacts created by intelligence, such as tools and imitations, and thus one's involuntary condition is just as important as the conscious form that is brought into the artwork. Thus, we see that while pushing the criteria of indeterminacy into an extreme compared to Schiller, play is a crucial element of the dynamics of self-consciousness in the *STI* as it is expressed in aesthetic activity.

Although it seems as though Schelling eventually turned away from this development of philosophy of art, it is important to note that play still appears to be a dynamic present in his later work, especially in his study of myth. One of the problems in studying Schelling's work over a span of time is that he notoriously had changed systems every few years, making it difficult for scholars to determine what elements of the former philosophy remains in the latter. Thus, if we receive a comprehensive study of Schelling's work, these systems are often presented in a disparate manner, such as one sees in Frederick Beiser's *German Idealism* or in Xavier Tilliette's *Schelling: Une philosophie en devenir*. However, other scholars have attempted to find common themes running through Schelling's development, thus giving an explanation for why Schelling found himself moving from system to system. In *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, Paul Tillich argues that one can trace these

sudden shifts in thought due to philosophers that he was heavily studying at the time, which would inspire the development of new concepts. However, Tillich argues that there is still the possibility of a continuous thread in Schelling's work if we use the "historical-dialectical method", since Schelling's movement from philosopher to philosopher isn't random. We can explain why the next philosopher would attract him given his state of development at a given time, seeing that there is an inner progress moving him in regards to his own influences (Tillich 22-4). Scholars like Jean-François Marquet (in *Liberté et existence*) and Dale Snow (in *Schelling and the End of Idealism*), on the other hand, dispense with the need for continuity amongst the systems, and argue that his development of so many systems should be seen in light of the fundamental tension that generates all of them. For example, Snow states: "The tension between system and life, reason and unreason, conscious and unconscious, God and evil, is the key hermeneutical principles for understanding Schelling's philosophy" (3). What we are to learn from Schelling, according to Snow, is that his inability to achieve a totalizing system is due to Schelling's discovery of a limit within philosophy itself rather than as failure on his part.

Although I will not tackle this issue of the continuity of Schelling's work between the *STI* to works after *Philosophie der Kunst*, I do agree with Marquet and Snow that the fundamental tension within the *STI* is still present in his later work in regards to myth as poetry, specifically in his *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* of 1842. At the end of the *STI*, Schelling briefly touches upon myth while discussing the importance of aesthetic activity to philosophy, since the aesthetic is the means by which philosophy can make itself exoteric. Although we sometimes see the

aesthetic as something produced by the individual, he sets a task that must be approached by the community of Egos as a whole:

Wenn es nun aber die Kunst allein ist, welcher das, was der Philosoph nur subjektiv darzustellen vermag, mit allgemeiner Gültigkeit objektiv zu machen gelingen kann, so ist, um noch diesen Schluß daraus zu ziehen, zu erwarten, daß die Philosophie, so wie sie in der Kindheit der Wissenschaft von der Poesie geboren und genährt worden ist, und mit ihr alle diejenigen Wissenschaften, welche durch sie der Vollkommenheit entgegengeführt werden, nach ihrer Vollendung als ebensoviel einzelne Ströme in den allgemeinen Ozean der Poesie zurückfließen, von welchem sie ausgegangen waren. Welches aber das Mittelglied der Rückkehr der Wissenschaft zur Poesie sein werde, ist im allgemeinen nicht schwer zu sagen, da ein solches Mittelglied in der Mythologie existiert hat, ehe diese, wie es jetzt scheint, unauflöbliche Trennung geschehen ist. Wie aber eine neue Mythologie, welche nicht Erfindung des einzelnen Dichters, sondern eines neuen, nur *einen* Dichter gleichsam vorstellenden Geschlechts sein kann, selbst entstehen könne, dies ist ein Problem dessen Auflösung allein von den künftigen Schicksalen der Welt und den weiteren Verlauf der Geschichte zu erwarten ist. (AS I 697)

Here we see Schelling arguing that initially, while science was in its early developments, philosophy was heavily reliant upon poetry for its sources of intellectual activity.

However, once science has developed this content in its own form of intellectual activity, he argues that there must then be a return back to poetry within philosophy to externalize

this activity. Mythology, as we see it manifested by the Ancient Greeks, was this way of moving from science to poetry, a method that we seem to lack in his time. However, mythology is something that cannot be developed by a single Ego, which we have seen that no particular Ego has a privileged perspective in regards to poetry because its activity is completed by a return to the unconscious. Instead, mythology emerges from the community of Egos, which only appears unified when we see it through a teleological or historical lens. After this explanation, Schelling then discusses in the last part of the *STI* how the Ego recognizes its internal constitution in others, thus finding itself in a community of other intelligences that remain partially hidden from it. The communal aspect of mythology is important because it highlights an additional limit that the Ego encounters in that it encounters others like itself that also generate resistance. As such, no individual is in the privileged, transcendent space to dictate to its time how to form or direct the current communal discourse, just as he explained in the “Einleitung” that no Ego can determine before completing one’s inquiry the form and content of philosophy. Thus, Marquet and Snow do appear to be correct that Schelling is conveying here that the achievement of a total system by the Ego is impossible, yet the infinite striving by consciousness for this complete system is a constitutive part of its self-awareness. Thus, for critical philosophy to even operate, it must take itself and its perspective seriously enough to delineate itself from the infinite world, but remain at play in that it doesn’t make this delineation permanent and impermeable, thus realizing itself as a momentary, finite configuration.

In his discussion of myth later in *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* of 1842, it appears that Schelling preserves the tension

between theoretical and practical philosophy and the infinite productivity of unconscious *Poesie*. While outlining the possibility of extracting truth from mythology, Schelling explains in his first lecture that truth and poetry are seen as antithetical to one another. In establishing a philosophy of mythology, Schelling argues that we must be able to extract some truth from mythology itself. However, since mythology contains the poetic, we must see how this complicates one's attempt to grasp the truth:

In Folge dieser Bemerkungen würde sich die poetische Erklärung näher dahin bestimmen: Es sey wohl eine Wahrheit in der Mythologie, aber keine, die absichtlich in sie gelegt sey, keine also auch, die sich festhalten und als solche aussprechen ließe. Alle Elemente der Wirklichkeit seyen in ihrer, aber etwa so, wie sie auch in einem Märchen der Art seyen, von welcher Goethe uns ein glänzendes Beispiel hinterlassen hat, wo nämlich der eigentliche Reiz darauf beruht, daß es uns einen Sinn vorspiegle oder in der Ferne zeige, aber der sich uns beständig wieder entziehe, dem wir nachzujagen gezwungen wären, ohne ihn je erreichen zu können; und unstreitig, derjenige würde als Meister in dieser Gattung gelten, der uns auf diese Weise am geschicktesten zu täuschen, den Zuhörer am meisten in Athem und gleichsam zu Besten zu halten verstünde. (AS 5, 22-3)

Schelling says that this is the best description of mythology, which he states that it gives us a semblance of cohesion while it always avoids being subsumed by theoretical reason. The poetic is antithetical to theoretical truth because, as was stated in the *STI*, it generates a product that is created by the Ego, and thus is a work of fiction. Yet this does not mean that theoretical reason is unable to extract any truth from mythology (which would

preclude the possibility of a philosophy of mythology), since part of what poetic fiction does is take material from the unconscious and shape it with conscious technique. Thus, Schelling thinks that mythology opens up potentials that were hidden before from consciousness in the unconscious, but theoretical reason must realize it can never exhaust these potentials that are brought out in mythology, nor can it interpret mythology literally like non-fiction prose. If a philosophy of mythology is possible, Schelling reminds us that we must understand the dynamics that we see in the *STI* within the artwork, which the combination of art and poetry within mythology makes it possible for theoretical reason to extract determinate truths within the created potentials without ever exhausting the possible truths that are within the work.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, although Schelling may have shifted his focus in his later work, I do think this dynamic of play remains intact in his treatment of the aesthetic and myth. Specifically, the tension between theoretical and practical reason remains indeterminate within the work, where the work of fiction serves as a potential for truth without being truth itself.

In concluding this discussion, although we see some continuity with Schiller in the *STI*, Schelling introduces some significant shifts in how to conceptualize the “Ich” through play. Both turn to the aesthetic as sites to bring together the conscious and unconscious parts of the self without hierarchy or reduction, therefore recognizing that the self is not fully self-transparent nor should conscious rationality take priority.

However, Schelling reconceptualizes play with the focus on the dynamic tension of the parts, arguing that self-consciousness is generated by the very aporia that Schiller was

---

<sup>43</sup> For more discussion concerning Schelling’s concern with mythology, particularly in regards to generating a new mythology, see Wolfram Högrefe’s *Prädikation und Genesis: Metaphysik als Fundamentalheuristik im Ausgang von Schellings “Die Weltalter”* (especially in Part II).

seeking to resolve. As such, bringing the unconscious and conscious into harmony, as Schiller does, would disperse the very form of finite consciousness that we are trying to study within transcendental philosophy. Seeing that this awareness of the antagonism is what gives such a unique form of self-consciousness, one that is both conscious and cognizant of its unconscious foundation, is the reason why he turns to the aesthetic to preserve this play dynamic in the real. The product of aesthetic activity, whether it be the artwork or myth, provides a real instantiation of the limit that makes us critical of our Ego, both individually and communally, yet still challenges us to grow past that limit. This ensures that the self and community are living things that are in a dynamic state of becoming, mediating between a finite real (i.e. being) and an infinite ideal (i.e. nothingness). In addition, this product of aesthetic activity also preserves the very point of indeterminacy that philosophy is grappling with, and therefore is something that can always be revisited at a later time to acquire new determinations. As we will see in the next chapter, Nietzsche will carry this discussion of self-consciousness and play further, arguing that human rationality is far more premature as an animal faculty than we had ever realized. As such, play becomes even more important for Nietzsche as a means of the Ego to overcome itself.

### Chapter 3

#### Play As Affirmation in Friedrich Nietzsche's Child

Although Friedrich Nietzsche was often critical of Schiller and Schelling, it is undeniable that he was greatly influenced by the ideas these two figures introduced to the German intellectual world.<sup>44</sup> In particular, when transitioning into his later works, it is clear that a play concept similar to Schiller and Schelling is operating in the background when Nietzsche approaches issues of the "Ich". This is not surprising given that Nietzsche takes up similar concerns about the relationship of the "Ich" and "Nature", weary of philosophers who try to abstract into a dualist philosophy. Instead, he takes up Schiller and Schelling's concerns about psychology and anthropology, looking at consciousness as an embodied, and therefore limited, faculty. In the second preface of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*,<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche remarks that he himself has made a significant shift when writing this piece, coming out of a dark period and moving into a period of renewal. He describes the very feeling of this renewal as an "intoxication of recovery" (*Trunkenheit der Genesung*)(KSA 3, 345)<sup>46</sup>. Yet in this shift into recovery, he realizes that philosophy and psychology are intertwined by the health of the philosopher: "Ein

---

<sup>44</sup> In the case of Schiller, Brent Kalar's "The Naive and the Natural: Schiller's Influence on Nietzsche's Early Aesthetics" discusses the influence of Schiller's concept of the naïve in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* upon Nietzsche's "aestheticism" in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, i.e. his strategy to develop a moral theory based on his aesthetic theory. This chapter will focus on Nietzsche's later work, but I believe this early influence is significant nonetheless.

<sup>45</sup> The second preface was published in 1886, the same year that *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* was published. I believe that this second preface indicates that many of the insights had from his recovery before *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* remain present in his later works, especially his discussion of the gravity of Europe's sickness and the free spirit that could potentially liberate humanity from this sickness.

<sup>46</sup> All citations from Nietzsche's work come from the *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, abbreviated as KSA with the volume and page number.

Pyschologe kennt wenig so anziehende Fragen, wie die nach dem Verhältniss von Gesundheit und Philosophie, und für den Fall, dass er selber krank wird, bringt er seine ganze wissenschaftliche Neugierde mit in seine Krankheit” (KSA 3, 347). A philosopher who is ill is unable to produce a philosophy that escapes that illness, and we therefore must judge the quality of life espoused by a philosophy based on the vitality of the philosopher. In this chapter, I argue that Nietzsche attempted to establish a philosophy that found its affirmation of life by a return to embodied play, and thus uses the child as a metaphor of the overcoming of modern humanity in Europe. Using *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882), *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-85), *Jenseits von Gute und Böse* (1886), and *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), I will first look into what Nietzsche describes as the sickness of Europe that can be seen through its philosophy and academia, specifically that its obsession with truth and certainty makes it turn away from life. Then I explore how Nietzsche explains the relationship between consciousness and the organic body, and how this biological understanding of consciousness attempts to ground the “Ich” or ego in the power of narrative that can open itself to play. Finally, I will end by explaining how Nietzsche turns to the child as a metaphor as this new way of approaching life, which it is the child that is able to achieve the sacred “yes-saying” to the world.

Given that philosophies are a product of the psychology of the philosopher, a major question that Nietzsche insists upon is whether the philosophy was produced out of illness (weakness) or health (strength). Those who produce philosophy out of illness need it to justify their weakness, i.e. to hide from the world, or to make the world bearable through distortions. Those who produce it out of health treat it as a luxury, but

do not rely on it as a veil to the world because they can engage the world without the reflection that sickness brings (*KSA 3, 347*). When the body is sick, it seeks medicine (as correctives) and rest (as certainty), which Nietzsche suspects has been the motivation of most philosophies produced in Europe:

Jede Philosophie, welche den Frieden höher stellt als den Krieg, jede Ethik mit einer negativen Fassung des Begriffs Glück, jede Metaphysik und Physik, welche ein Finale kennt, einen Endzustand irgend welcher Art, jedes vorwiegend aesthetische oder religiöse Verlangen nach einem Abseits, Jenseits, Ausserhalb, Oberhalb erlaubt zu fragen, ob nicht die Krankheit das gewesen ist, was den Philosophen inspirirt hat. Die unbewusste Verkleidung physiologischer Bedürfnisse unter die Mäntel des Objektiven, Ideellen, Rein-Geistigen geht bis zum Erschrecken weit, -- und oft genug habe ich mich gefragt, ob nicht, im Grossen gerechnet, Philosophie bisher überhaupt nur eine Auslegung des Leibes und ein *Missverständniss des Leibes* gewesen ist. (*KSA 3, 348*)

Thus the *need* for philosophy in Europe is the mark of an era that is sick and not at home in its body. This requires what Nietzsche calls “ein philosophischer Arzt” (*KSA 3, 349*), a person who addresses the vitality of a people and an age, and philosophizes so that there is growth towards the future. In addition, this new philosophy must be able to understand the body, which has on the whole been misunderstood by somatophobic philosophers. If the proper relationship cannot be established between philosophy and the body, the survival of Western culture is seriously threatened because we cannot properly interface and adapt to life, thus being left to decay.

The sickness that inflicts Europe as a whole, which produces philosophies of illness and death, is the sickness that searches for truth and certainty. Nietzsche states: "Das Vertrauen zum Leben ist dahin; das Leben selbst wurde zum Problem" (KSA 3, 350). The European human no longer puts its trust in living, but rather looks at life as something to resolve or escape. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche claims that philosophy has been a particular practice that has perpetuated this desire to escape:

Der Eifer und die Feinheit, ich möchte sogar sagen: Schlaueit, mit denen man heute überall in Europa dem Problem „von der wirklichen und der scheinbaren Welt“ auf den Leib rückt, giebt zu denken und zu horchen; und wer hier im Hintergrunde nur einen „Willen zur Wahrheit“ und nichts weiter hört, erfreut sich gewiss nicht der schärfsten Ohren. In einzelnen und seltenen Fällen mag wirklich ein solcher Wille zur Wahrheit, irgend ein ausschweifender und abenteuernder Muth, ein Metaphysicker-Ehrgeiz des verlorren Postens dabei betheiltigt sein, der zuletzt eine Handvoll „Gewissheit“ immer noch einem ganzen Wagen voll schöner Möglichkeiten vorzieht; es mag sogar puritanische Fanatiker des Gewissens geben, welche lieber noch sich auf ein sicheres Nichts als auf ein ungewisses Etwas sterben legen. (KSA 5, 22-3)

Those who produce their philosophy out of weakness do so because they cannot face the multiplicity and uncertainty of the world, and therefore try to construct an alternative behind its appearance to retreat from it. Nietzsche immediately becomes suspicious when one is calling for unity, truth and simplicity, since this call for reduction and conformity says more about the anxiety one has for life rather than the embrace and

understanding of it. Before this passage, Nietzsche makes the observation that all philosophies are autobiographical, where the entire world is transformed in its own image (KSA 5, 22).<sup>47</sup> Although philosophers attempt to portray themselves as objective and indifferent, Nietzsche suspects a much deeper power grab taking place that is deceptive in its implementation. Deep within the façade of indifference and objectivity, Nietzsche argues there is a seed of some event that left an indelible mark and an internal struggle for the philosopher (KSA 5, 19). In being dishonest with one's capacity to deal with this event as an opportunity to transform the self, philosophers commonly try to reshape their understanding of the world instead to be more accommodating to what is being avoided internally. Thus life must be made into a mere appearance, a problem or riddle that must be solved rather than experienced, and the world that is posited behind it is the solution to this problem. Plato posited the intelligible realm to counter the constant becoming that characterized the visible realm, and from this argues that we must aim at moving beyond this life of mere becoming. This simplification of life, and the collapsing of its multiplicity, is in fact the need for untruth in the guise of the "love of truth". In §24 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, the falsification of life is what allows one to enjoy it, where the narrative one posits allows one to move forward with meaning, while the will towards truth refines the untruth rather than countering it.

Thus, Nietzsche is not merely being facetious when asking earlier in §1 about what value we as philosophers hold in truth, but rather is trying to reveal the healthy and

---

<sup>47</sup> In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche states in the second preface: "diese Kunst der Transfiguration ist eben Philosophie. Es steht uns Philosophen nicht frei, zwischen Seele und Leib zu trennen, wie das Volk trennt, es steht uns noch weniger frei, zwischen Seele und Geist zu trennen" (KSA 3, 349). Thus, in the same year Nietzsche published *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, the recognition of philosophy as transforming the world and self rather than understanding it becomes emphasized in this earlier work through this new preface.

unhealthy ways it relates to the fictions that make vitality possible. In his new philosophy, this importance of the relationship between truth and untruth needs to be recognized:

Die Falschheit eines Urtheiles ist uns noch kein Einwand gegen ein Urtheil... Die Frage ist, wie weit es lebensfördernd, lebenerhaltend, Art-erhaltend, vielleicht gar Art-züchtend ist; und wir sind grundsätzlich geneigt zu behaupten, dass die falschsten Urtheile (zu denen die synthetischen Urtheile a priori gehören) uns die unentbehrlichsten sind, dass ohne Geltenlassen der logischen Fiktionen, ohne ein Messen der Wirklichkeit an der rein erfundenen Welt des Unbedingten, Sich-selbst-Gleichen, ohne eine beständige Fälschung der Welt durch die Zahl der Mensch nicht leben könnte, -- dass Verzichtleisten auf falsche Urtheile ein Verzichtleisten auf Leben eine Verneinung des Lebens wäre. Die Unwahrheit als Lebensbedingung zugestehn: das heisst freilich auf eine gefährliche Weise den gewohnten Wertgefühlen Widerstand leisten; und eine Philosophie, die das wagt, stellt sich damit allein schon jenseits von Gut und Böse. (KSA 5, 18)

Although Kant had asked how synthetic a priori judgements are possible, Nietzsche asserts we must ask why they are necessary for life at all even if their truth is not guaranteed. In its vehemence of finding truth, as well as doing away with becoming and uncertainty, philosophy has started to turn on the very foundations that makes life

possible and has become a death instinct (exemplified by Plato's position in *Phaedo*).<sup>48</sup> Fiction, according to Nietzsche, allows life to move forward, and we will continually destabilize it if we demand truth from it. Although this destabilization is not in itself a process that leads to sickness, the inability to construct a new ground in place of what is destroyed has led Europe into nihilism. The philosopher is able to destroy the foundations of untruth that has been given to her through a thorough means of critical thinking, but if she is unable to realize the comedy of this destruction, she is unable to move forward once she has dishevelled everything. If the philosopher loses her sense of humour and takes her quest for truth too seriously, the process that would ultimately serve to empower her by breaking away from the meaning of others will only leave her in the tragedy of meaninglessness (*KSA* 5, 42-3). This need of humor makes Nietzsche joke: "Wie hätte auch ein Plato das Leben ausgehalten – ein griechisches Leben, zu dem er Nein sagte, -- ohne einen Aristophanes!" (*KSA* 5, 47). Plato's critical rejection of Greek life must have included some sense of humour, or else he would have not continued through with trying to reshape it. Although Platonism itself is expressed as an obstacle for modern European philosophy to overcome,<sup>49</sup> Nietzsche does often express the accomplishment of Plato in leaving his mark on the becoming of European

---

<sup>48</sup> In Chapter 4, I will discuss the importance of the death drive in Sigmund Freud's work, which is also characterized as a contraction from multiplicity. However, Freud emphasizes that this must be in a dynamic engagement with Eros in order for life to maintain its elasticity.

<sup>49</sup> In the preface of *Jenseit von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche states that Platonism is one of the major dogmatic philosophies that has unconsciously inscribed decadent concepts upon humanity, just like the teachings of Vedanta in Asia. Specifically, Platonism denies the importance of perspective, which Nietzsche identifies as the ground for all life, in its search for the pure spirit and good in itself. However, he states that we should not be unthankful for these teachings, for they did serve us well as we were in the process coming into consciousness (*KSA* 5, 12).

civilization. If Plato's negation of the world of appearances had led to the nihilism he sees in his own culture, he would have taken his own life instead of establishing his legacy.<sup>50</sup> However, what has happened to modern philosophers is that they tend to, in their lack of being able to play, be unable to detach from the world that they negate through critique. Although philosophical consciousness certainly approaches the problem with no lack of rigour, its very constitution is what leads it to the tragedy of nihilism and depression.

The organic constitution of consciousness has been a major contributor to the achievements and obstacles of European civilization, and Nietzsche thinks we must have a critical eye towards it in order to get out of the sickness he describes. As he finishes up his chapter "von den Vorurtheilen der Philosophen" in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, he calls for a return to psychology because it will lead us back to the foundational problems that he wishes to address (*KSA* 5, 39).<sup>51</sup> Although many philosophers have taken consciousness to be a given and the seat of human action, Nietzsche considers consciousness to be a recent development in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: "Die Bewusstheit ist die letzt und späteste Entwicklung des Organischen und folglich auch das Unfertigste und Unkräftste daran. Aus der Bewusstheit stamen unzählige Fehlgriffe, welche machen, dass ein Thier, ein Mensch zu Grunde geht, früher als es nöthig, wäre,

---

<sup>50</sup> Thus, in §7, Nietzsche states that Epicurus called Plato and his followers *Dionysiokolakes*, meaning "flatters of Dionysis". Nietzsche then interprets this as meaning "das sind Alles *Schauspieler*, daran ist nichts Ächtes" (*KSA* 5, 21). As we begin to discuss the importance of art and semblance in Nietzsche's thought, it is probably the case that Nietzsche wouldn't consider this an insult, even if Platonists would take it as such.

<sup>51</sup> In *Nietzsche, Psychology, & First Philosophy*, Robert Pippen approaches Nietzsche's writing as forming a type of stance of psychology, and specifically putting psychology in the place of metaphysics as a first philosophy (Pippen 2).

„über das Geschick“, wie Homer sagt“ (KSA 3, 382). Due to the fact that consciousness is new and that it is what marks our emergence from the other animals by philosophical accounts, it seems problematic to assume that it should be a faculty that is automatically sufficient and dominant. Instead, as something incomplete and weak, it is a faculty that is capable of generating its own illusions to narrate to itself strength against the obstacles it faces, just like the philosophers who generate their philosophies out of weakness. If it weren't for the animal instincts of the body being so powerful to counter consciousness, the organism would be at risk. Even though this could be read as a hyperbolic and romantic view of instinct (*Instinkt*), this account of consciousness is compelling in that it emphasizes a need for critique where most philosophers have been naïve. In §34 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche says that it is paradoxical to ask consciousness to provide honest answers about itself, as was expected in Kant's critiques and Descartes' meditations. It ignores the possibility that consciousness itself is a fiction that we can't see past, and yet Nietzsche does not think the fact that it generates fictive narratives is itself a problem. Back in the aphorism (§11) from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* where Nietzsche presents consciousness as a new development, he also states that it is fundamentally focused on error.<sup>52</sup> It is common to think of consciousness as a collector of knowledge, but Nietzsche argues that its development comes about in its ability to incorporate the mistakes of the organism rather than taking in something positive.

---

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche states: “Es ist immer noch eine ganze neue und eben erst dem menschlichen Auge aufdämmernde, kaum noch deutlich erkennbare *Aufgabe, das Wissen sich einzuverleiben* und instinctiv zu machen, -- eine Aufgabe, welche nur von Denen gesehen wird, die begriffen haben, dass bisher nur unsere *Irrthümer* uns einverleibt waren und dass alle unsere Bewusstheit sich auf Irrthümer bezieht!” (KSA 3, 383).

The reason that we accumulate our errors rather than knowledge is that consciousness and memory are tied to pain, and unavoidably so. Every mistake the organism makes is possibly a threat to its life, and thus shows up to consciousness as an agitation or resistance. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche argues that pain and pleasure are intertwined with one another, and the level at which we can perceive pleasure is dependent on the level of pain we can feel. In feeling great resistance or lack, the capacity of pleasure increases because the relief that follows the previous struggle. For this reason, Nietzsche is critical of Utilitarianism and Epicureanism because these philosophies on the whole work to diminish pain while not realizing they are diminishing the very pleasures of life that make it worth living.<sup>53</sup> Science, according to aphorism §12, aims at reducing the pain of uncertainty encountered in the world and maximizing the pleasures through tested methods, but this ends up being a self-defeating task due to its misunderstanding of pleasure and pain (*KSA*, 3 381-2). Although pain and pleasure are intertwined, Nietzsche also insists that power resides in the feeling of pain because it is what stays with us and makes us look outward: “der Schmerz fragt immer nach der Ursache, während die Lust geneigt ist, bei sich selber stehen zu bleiben und nicht rückwärts zu schauen” (*KSA* 3, 384). Pain unsettles us in such a way that the outside world shows up to us as something to react to, as well as anticipate in further causes of agitation. Although we can observe this immediately with animal behaviour when a

---

<sup>53</sup> It is unclear whether Nietzsche is levelling this attack on John Stuart Mill in particular, who does seem to acknowledge, at least implicitly, that higher pleasures bring a sense of pain or discomfort in their cultivation. Bernard Reginster explores this dynamic between pleasure and pain in *The Affirmation of Life*, where he attempts to explain how the two are intertwined without the justification of a theodicy in the background, but rather argues that suffering is a metaphysical necessity for pleasure (232-3). In “Priestly Power and Damaged Life in Nietzsche and Adorno”, Eric Nelson also attempts to address this issue of how pain is necessary for pleasure without relying on a theodicy (354-5).

creature is hurt, Nietzsche posits that it is the same dynamic with the philosopher who turns against the world of appearances. Consciousness develops because of the pain of facing the world, specifically the resistance we feel against our will.

As such, Nietzsche thinks that our immediate response then is to inflict pain upon others to express our power, since pain is what is perceptible to us. Yet we can also turn this inward upon our own body as well. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, the very possibility of morality is based in pain because of the need for memory:

Es gieng niemals ohne Blut, Martern, Opfer ab, wenn der Mensch es nöthig hielt, sich ein Gedächtniss zu machen,; die schauerlichsten Opfer und Pfänder..., die widerlichsten Verstümmelungen..., die grausamsten Ritualformen aller religiösen Culte... -- alles Das hat in jenem Instinkte seinen Ursprung, welcher im Schmerz das mächtigste Hülfsmittel der Mnemonik errieth. (KSA 5, 295)

Mutilation and sacrifice in cultural practices, therefore, do not hold value in itself, but rather are valuable because they were an instinctive way to impress the memory on the body. Nietzsche admires that, as forgetful animals, we eventually learned how to hurt ourselves so that the past could stay with us, a technique that has become coded in our culture as something sacred. Asceticism, which is one of the extreme forms of self-affliction, has become framed as one of the most holy ways of living, and the memories of such cultures become indelibly inscribed onto the body.<sup>54</sup> Yet this suffering was also

---

<sup>54</sup> Although Babette Babich explores the mnemotechnics of pain in her book *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, she approaches pain that arises from oppression within culture (137, 157-8), which Nietzsche does discuss in detail as he develops his concept of *Ressentiment*. However, what is left unaddressed in the learned behaviour of self-affliction, which Nietzsche argues is inherent in the power of asceticism.

seen as a means to empower the will, often in proportion to the pain inflicted upon the body. Although this may seem paradoxical to some, we have already seen this dynamic is Schiller's discussion of tragedy, where the feeling of one's formal side comes about in times of tragedy and the will runs into the uncompromising material forces around it. The greater resistance we experience to our will, the more "real" our will feels as it is frustrated. It is for this reason that pain and suffering is integral to our will and consciousness, since it inscribes in our bodies the memory of this resistance.

Given Nietzsche's explanation that as animals, humans discovered this technique of inscribing memory into the body, thus forming consciousness and awareness of will, it should be looked at as something still developing and malleable, as well as a faculty that can fall into fatal error. In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes puts forward the notion that our reason is the result of random forces without design, an alternative to being the creation of God:

Let us not argue them, but grant them that everything said about God is a fiction. According to their supposition, then, I have arrived at my present state by fate or chance or a continuous chain of event, or by some other means; yet since deception and error seem to be imperfections, the less powerful they make my original cause, the more likely it is that I am so imperfect as to be deceived all the time. (Descartes 14)

Nietzsche takes Descartes' alternative seriously, including the consequence that this faculty that arose without a designer cannot be a ground of certainty. Descartes' error is that he was unable to really accept the possibility that reason is a source of error, and thus he tried separating consciousness from the body in order to repress this alternative. This

delusion of consciousness being separable from the body has prevented its growth, since it has assumed that it's development is complete: "Weil die Menschen die Bewusstheit schon zu haben glaubten, haben sie sich wenig Mühe darum geben, sie zu erwerben" (KSA 3, 383). Thus Nietzsche does not necessarily question rationality from a postmodern perspective that embraces irrationality (which this view sometimes is attributed to him).<sup>55</sup> Instead, he is approaching consciousness from the perspective of it being a biological development, and if consciousness thinks it has achieved maturity, it makes little effort to question itself and further develop. Conscious thought has the danger of becoming complacent, and as such think it has more power and capacity than it really has.

It is important to not assume, however, that Nietzsche is advocating that we resist this development of rationality,<sup>56</sup> but rather wants to point out that many philosophers have developed positions that undermine the potential vitality of this development by assuming that rationality is an achievement of the human spirit that overcomes the body. The desire to escape the body stems from an inability to deal with pain, specifically the pain of the world resisting our will. In determining that the external world is hostile, and the individual recoils, *ressentiment* "selbst schöpferisch wird und Werthe gebiert" (KSA

---

<sup>55</sup> In *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Walter Kaufmann argues that Nietzsche makes a distinction between "consciousness" and "rationality", which later I will highlight in the text. However, as Kaufmann notes, those who don't see this distinction being made in Nietzsche's work will see him as contradicting himself at a fundamental level (Kaufmann 268).

<sup>56</sup> In *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body*, Christian Emden emphasizes this point that Nietzsche isn't against reason, but rather he is against the thesis that reason precedes language, and therefore can be separated from the body (139). In neglecting this debate concerning language and reason in the background, it is easy to see Nietzsche as an advocate of anti-rationalism, which has been a common line of interpretation.

5, 270). Although some may see Nietzsche's discussion of *ressentiment* as a negative development in humanity, since it moves away from "noble morality", this is also the point where Nietzsche thinks that humanity gained depth and became "an interesting animal" (*ein interessantes Thier*) (KSA 5, 266). Without *ressentiment*, the human animal would not have been able to turn inward, would not have been able to hold onto its errors, and would not have been capable of memory. The noble character, given its unopposed strength, engages the environment without having to hold onto anything, acting on instinct without finding any obstacle to reflect its subjectivity back as the slavish character experiences when it returns to itself in frustration. Although Nietzsche describes the noble character as strong and open, having a trust in life, this character is also a forgetful beast, with little awareness of its actions, nor in a position to actively affirm them. The slavish character, although poisoned by *ressentiment*, becomes a cleverer animal from its recoiling, while the noble character simply forgets, since pleasure does not stay in one's mind as pain does, its struggles and obstacles dissolve as soon as they are overcome (KSA 5, 272).<sup>57</sup>

Instead of reading Nietzsche as evaluating one character better than the other, it is important to see that both characters express a will to power within their own physiological means, and both have had their time of dominance over the other. Given that the slavish character has the capacity to exist temporally through memory, the ability to wait and to hold onto the past allowed the possibility of a slave revolt in morals. The slavish character eventually developed the capacity to create something new, although

---

<sup>57</sup> Also, as Kaufmann points out, if we are to take seriously Nietzsche's claim that great joy doesn't arise until there is suffering, the noble character wouldn't be capable to experience Nietzsche's conception of happiness (272-5).

given its conditions of development, it is still only a reaction: “Während alle vornehme Moral aus einem triumphirenden Ja-sagen zu sich selber herauswächst, sagt die Sklaven-Moral von vornherein Nein zu einem „Auserhalb“, zu einem „Anders“, zu einem „Nicht-selbst“: und dies Nein ist ihre schöpferische That” (Band 5, 270-271). Although it is through the negation of one’s environment and of others, Nietzsche does note that a creative ability emerges here: the ability to narrate reality and to compose a counter-narrative. Instead of merely saying “yes” to reality and moving on, slave morality develops a normative realm from which to critique events and, with patience, change them.

Although there are benefits to this ability to negate the world, the fact that it is a new development means that it is also incomplete and potentially dangerous if we embrace it uncritically. Given that this recoiling is a rejection of what resists the will, desire as a force that moves us can become poisoning if we cannot return to the world with life-affirming action. In §194 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche discusses three types of desires in the analogy of how one desires another. Just before this discussion, Nietzsche states in §175 that “Man liebt zuletzt seine Begierde, und nicht das Begehrte” (KSA 5, 103). Thus, in §194, he says that we should judge the character of a person not merely for what they desire, but also in the very structure of how they desire. The first form of desire is satisfied with the mere sensation of the possession of the desired person or thing, and the feeling of lack ends there. However, the second form of desire is structured by distrust and jealousy (*Misstrauens*), where the desire is only satisfied when the object is fully exhausted and revealed. In this form of desire, the object remains suspect of remaining concealed and untrue, and the demand becomes an

obsession to fully “possess” (*besessen*) the object of desire. The third form of desire goes beyond jealousy, and demands that the self is revealed to the object of desire so that there is no illusion between the self and object, and one risks the unravelling of the self for this form of expression (KSA 5, 115). When reading this aphorism on desire, I see a parallel to the discussion in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, where each form of desire represents a different moral constitution. The first form of desire depicts the noble character that faces no resistance to its desire, and therefore doesn’t have the capacity to reflect or question the process. The second form resembles the slave character, where desire is structured by jealousy, i.e. a distrust of appearance that makes the possession of the object beyond the mere physical existence of the object. The final form of desire represents a new form that does not become obsessed about the object behind appearance, but rather is concerned about the self being fully posited, and thus impressed on the object. Given surrounding contexts, this third form of desiring seems to be what Nietzsche himself wants to aim at when talking about the free spirit, which is the one that uses desire through play to affirm rather than resent (and distrust) its life and environment.

One of the crucial concerns Nietzsche has about desire that emerges from the slavish character, and that resembles the second form of desire mentioned above, is that its obsession with utility and futurity diminishes the very possibility of having desire. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche bemoans that the slavish character has taken over even in our attempt to pursue joy, where utility becomes an insatiable goal that consumes our spirit:

Denn das Leben auf der Jagd nach Gewinn zwingt fortwährend dazu, seinen Geist bis zur Erschöpfung auszugeben, im beständigen Sich-Verstellen oder Ueberlisten oder Zuvorkommen: die eigentliche Tugend ist jetzt, Etwas in weniger Zeit zu thun, als ein Anderer. Und so giebt es nur selten Stunden der *erlaubten* Redlichkeit: in diesen aber ist man müde und möchte sich nicht nur „gehen lassen“, sondern lang und breit und plump sich *hinstrecken*. Gemäss diesem Hange schreibt man jetzt seine *Briefe*; deren Stil und Gesit immer das eigentliche „Zeichen der Zeit“ sein werden. Giebt es noch ein Vergnügen an Gesellschaft und an Künsten, so ist es ein Vergnügen, wie es müde-gearbeitete Slaven sich zurecht machen. Oh über diese Genügsamkeit der „Freude“ bei unsern Gebildeten und Ungebildeten! Oh über diese zunehmende Verdächtigung aller Freud! *Die Arbeit* bekommt immer mehr alles gute Gewissen auf ihre Seite: der Hang zur Freude nennt sich bereits „Bedürfniss der Erholung“ un fängt an, sich vor sich selber zu schämen. (KSA 3, 556-7)

What Nietzsche depicts here of the overworked slave is similar to what we see in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, where productivity is tied to an obsession to outdo others who may try to subvert our desires. Due to this distrust of others, one never has time for honesty or camaraderie. Even the contemplative life comes under scrutiny, where we cannot merely “walk with ideas” without it being to a means of production. The slave must constantly seek a deeper justification for its desire, and thus is unable to feel joy in good conscience if it is not tethered to some sense of utility. This bad conscience that surrounds joy is unavoidable in the consciousness of the slavish character, because

fundamentally there is a misunderstanding about the experience of pleasure. The slave will only face pain to the extent that it will bring about more pleasure in the future, but this fails to see any inherent value of pain itself. In reluctantly facing suffering rather than embracing it, the slave remains passive to the world and others, and their desire remains unfulfilled because they will only be satiated when the world completely unfolds itself before their will (which is unlikely to happen). However, saying that the slavish character is forever in a state of jealousy and dissatisfaction, albeit sounding dreary, does not negate the power that might be generated by this mode of consciousness (even jealous lovers, albeit often abusive, can exert power over people as well).

Underlying Nietzsche's concern is whether or not this mode of consciousness is still vital, which he thinks inherently it must turn against life because its ability to deceive eventually turns on itself when it can no longer return to the world. "No-saying" allows one to gain distance from the world, but Nietzsche is cautious in not saying that the distance alone allows one to alter the world. In several passages, especially in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, it is noticeable that Nietzsche attacks the concept of "free will" as illusory. In §19, he talks about the concept of free will as an oversimplification of action, a forgetting of all that is involved in the process of becoming, and is the statement given by consciousness once it has stripped away the content of the action, and assigns an "I" in the place of the complex process.<sup>58</sup> In §17, Nietzsche had already laid the ground for this

---

<sup>58</sup> It should be noted that the influence of Spinoza upon German Idealism is quite stark here in Nietzsche's philosophy. Like Schelling's discussion in the *STI* about the difference between dogmatic and critical philosophy, the concept of "free will" is itself a dogmatism that tries to collapse the theoretical into the practical. However, both Schelling and Nietzsche also reject the theoretical determinism that they saw as dogmatic of Spinoza's philosophy, since that also tried to collapse the practical into the theoretical.

attack by discussing why the “I” (“Ich”) is a metaphysical mistake itself, something posited by logic and language:

... so will ich nicht müde werden, eine kleine kurze Thatsache immer wieder zu unterstreichen, welche von diesen Abergläubischen ungerne zugestanden wird, --- nämlich, dass ein Gedanke kommt, wenn „er“ will, und nicht wenn „ich“ will; so dass es eine Fälschung des Thatbestandes ist, zu sagen: das Subjekt „ich“ ist die Bedingung des Prädikats „denke“. Es denkt: aber dass dies „es“ gerade jenes alte berühmte „Ich“ sei, ist, milde geredet, nur eine Annahme, eine Behauptung, vor Allem keine „unmittelbare Gewissheit“. Zu letzt is schon mit diesem „es denkt“ zu viel gethan: schon dies „es“ enthält eine Auslegung des Vorgangs und gehört nicht zum Vorgange selbst. (KSA 5, 30-1)

Saying “I think” gives an amount of control to consciousness that Nietzsche doesn’t think is justified given his claim that consciousness is incomplete, and it is flawed to make it the seat of the self because it neglects the very things that make us “feel” our consciousness, particularly the embodied sensations we experience as we move from one condition to the next (KSA 5, 32). As has been pointed out, this position has already been established in Nietzsche’s earlier works. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, he establishes the body as the master of consciousness in “Von den Verächtern des Leibes”: “Hinter deinen Gedanken und Gefühlen, mein Bruder, steht ein mächtiger Gebieter, ein unbekannter Weiser – der heisst Selbst. In deinem Leibe wohnt er, dein Leib ist er” (KSA 4, 40). Although Platonic and Cartesian philosophies give priority to consciousness over the body, Nietzsche

sees this as a self-deception that ignores the real source of actions. Although the mind looks down at the body for being unconscious, we are reminded in the same aphorism that the body, as self, is the source of very things that the mind, as “I”, cannot escape, thus determining the content of its thoughts. When the body brings about pain or pleasure, the mind cannot stop the body from doing so. Since the mind doesn’t have this control of materiality of the self, it is fallacious to posit it as the “master” or “centre” of the self. In fact, as was noted in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, consciousness is the accumulation of pain and error, and thus the body’s encounter with the world would be the basis of what the mind has to interpret.

In moments of weakness, consciousness tries to withdraw from pain, and it uses its “no-saying” ability in such a way that it creates an illusory divide between consciousness and the body. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche describes this dynamic through the relationships of the lambs and the birds of prey, where in their weakness the lambs blame the birds of prey for their actions of strength, assuming that this expresses an ill will against them. Yet Nietzsche points out that to assume that the person of strength can refrain from actions of strength, thus separating will out from the content of the action, mistakes the very nature of action and will. This is the cognitive mistake of popular morality that perpetuates the self-deception of *ressentiment*:

Ebenso nämlich, wie das Volk den Blitz von seinem Leuchten trennt und letzteres als *Thun*, als Wirkung eines Subjekts nimmt, das Blitz heisst, so trennt die Volks-Moral auch die Stärke von den

Äusserungen der Stärke ab, wie also ob es hinter dem Starken ein indifferentes Substrat gäbe, dem es *freistünde*, Stärke zu äussern oder auch nicht. (KSA 5, 279)

In projecting a choice onto the bird of prey, the lamb narrates a metaphysical divide between its will and physical condition, transforming its situation into a “choice” to act weak, just as the philosopher in sickness constructs a metaphysical world to mask over the uncertainties of becoming as unimportant. This narration does have real life implications, where the herd of lamb gain footing for holding the birds of prey accountable for their actions. Yet what is worrisome is that the obstacle to be overcome becomes externalized, and the lamb loses sight of its own activity while criticizing the other. As was noted, pain is a sensation that causes consciousness to look outside of itself, to find a justification for what caused the pain. As such, the lamb doesn't need to hold itself accountable if it can blame the bird of prey for its pain. The justification is externalized, and consciousness, while in this dynamic, avoids how the lamb plays a role in the situation as well. If we wish to avoid the responsibility for the very pain that forms our consciousness, then the position of the lamb would be fine to take. Such dynamics allow the herd to come together to defend themselves from the birds of prey by constructing outside enemies. Yet in doing so, the lamb allows its own consciousness to be formed by the actions of the bird of prey rather than its own. In avoiding accountability, the lamb's morality, which represents slave morality, will be structured around the rejection of the behaviours of the other because the sole purpose of this morality is to eliminate pain. Yet if the very matter of our

consciousness is pain, then this slave morality is seeking the cessation of itself, or at the very least to hide from its own character. If a moral self is to have any content at all, it must actually say “yes” to some part of its suffering. However, the acceptance must not be in the form of a theodicy, which merely accepts this content contingently on whether or not it leads to a “greater good”. As a result, any morality that tries to ground itself in the unconditioned or in the maximizing of pleasure ultimately undermines itself, since it tries to create a subject that is vacuous. Although the power of “no-saying” is useful in that it makes us critical of the world and hold it at a distance, the danger is that we become so detached from the world that we no longer see any value living in it.<sup>59</sup> As such, the concept of “free will” is problematic in that it lacks the content of life that would make action in the world possible, and is often a discourse that points to a fleeing from responsibility given that it often is directed at externalized persons. Thus, “will to power” differs from “free will” in that “will to power” will have content, since it will take “no-saying” and “yes-saying” together to make changes in its world rather than divorce itself from its embodied content.

In this next few pages, it will be necessary to discuss at length how Nietzsche develops his moral philosophy, which requires play in order to overcome the ego, or the conscious “Ich”. Nietzsche is commonly characterized as an anti-moral philosopher given his critique of moral philosophy,<sup>60</sup> yet his

---

<sup>59</sup> As Reginster points out, this approach of slave morality not only resents the resistance to their desires, but also resents the desires themselves because they set up the very situation that we must overcome resistance (244).

<sup>60</sup> Kaufmann argues against this line of thought by pointing out that “moral” in Nietzsche’s sense is whenever one “imposes restraints on himself” (213). Thus, even his

criticisms are often directed at “popular morality” because they lack the following understanding of any morality that will have real traction in the world: 1) morality is not based in nature, and therefore is at its root arbitrary; 2) because it is arbitrary, it requires discipline to bring it into material action; and 3) due to the fact there are other people and obstacles in our environment that resist our will, part of the discipline of morality is to have enough humour and play to compromise our egos as we incorporate and overcome these obstacles. The first of these, that morality is arbitrary in nature, is argued for in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* and *Jenseit von Gut und Böse*, where he states that morality will always be in tension with nature. What is meant by arbitrary here is not that the morality embraced is incoherent and without structure, but rather that we must recognize that such moralities cannot be justified through nature. Nietzsche argues that those who try to ground morality in nature and scientific reason ultimately come to a major tension in their thought when they also assume that ethical and moral thought is suppose to raise us above nature as we embrace free will. If we find that morality, either through utilitarianism or Kantianism, is grounded in an order outside of us, then morality becomes heteronomous rather than autonomous as it looks externally for justification. Even if we appeal to reason in the sense of the categorical imperative, according to Nietzsche, it is ultimately self-alienating in that it empties the self of its content. Thus to be consistent, all moralities are arbitrary because we have no natural inclination to

---

discussion of overcoming oneself is a form of self-restraint, since impulses are addressed critically (214). I agree with Kaufmann on this interpretation, and will develop further that Nietzsche isn't arguing to dispense of morality, and actually wants to make it more rigorous.

follow them, but rather it comes from the choice to go against our inclinations.<sup>61</sup> In §29 (“Die Hinzu-Lügner”), of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, he uses an analogical argument between the “laws” found in Aristotle’s unities in the *Poetics* and the laws of morality and religion to reinforce that the existence of objective moral values is a fiction. Those who argued against the unities created the motivation for those defending them as laws to generate reasons for why they were laws of aesthetics, but these reasons were created not as a ground for these laws, but rather as a justification to see them as laws. At the heart of such a discourse reveals that what really happened was the defenders became accustomed to the unities in how they structured plays, and thus no longer see alternatives to this structure. However, these laws are not grounded in reason for those who hold to them, since the reasons came after the practice. Nietzsche thinks that the same is true for morality and religion, where the rationalization come afterward, and thus the practices themselves are arbitrary with add-on lies as justification to mask over the act of choosing (KSA 3, 401). However, this does not mean that Nietzsche dismisses the practice of morality merely because it contains this fictitious element. He states in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*:

[d]as Wesentliche und Unschätzbare an jeder Moral ist, dass sie ein langer Zwang ist: um den Stoicismus oder Port-Royal oder das Puritanerthum zu verstehen, mag man sich des Zwangs erinnern,

---

<sup>61</sup> As Pippen notes: “Philosophers, or those committed to truth and some hope of moral objectivity, want something out of existence, believe that sustaining their commitments and pursuing their projects are possible only if one knows what is truly worth pursuing, and they desire ardently to know that, to succeed” (14). Yet if Nietzsche is correct, morality can never be objective because it cannot be found in the world, and thus we must find a way to carry out our projects without needing a guarantee of truth or success.

unter dem bisher jede Sprache es zur Stärke und Freiheit  
gebracht, -- des metrischen Zwangs, der Tyrannei von Reim und  
Rhythmus. (KSA 5, 108)

Morality becomes a significant force because it constrains our natural impulses, and thus its essential value is the shaping force it has on our behaviour. They hold us over time to a structure that resists our inclinations, giving consciousness some traction in the world amongst the constant flux of sensations as it encounters resistance. If morality merely arose out of nature, as some moralists try to argue, it would not even become conscious to us, and therefore would fade into the unconscious actions of the self. The fact that morality is a struggle and potentially an error is what makes it come to the fore in conscious experience, and it is potentially an error because it is an arbitrary structure that possibly will endanger our life. Yet Nietzsche emphasizes that “[e]ine Moral könnte selbst aus einem Irrthum gewachsen sein: auch mit dieser Einsicht wäre das Problem ihres Werthes noch nicht einmal berührt” (KSA 3, 579). If we consider Nietzsche’s earlier premises about consciousness being a collection of error and pain, then our conscious reflections on morality must involve some error with regards to our biological nature, since it deviates from our natural unconscious self.

Given that some philosophers try to mask over the arbitrariness of morality, Nietzsche is very sceptical of the attempt to popularize morality for the herd because it often avoids the discipline that is needed to enforce such a structure upon the self. As was pointed out earlier, Nietzsche attacks moral accounts that rely on some external ground, whether it be “nature” or “reason”,

because we are looking for unconscious reasons for a conscious decision on how to structure our behaviour. In §292 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, we see Nietzsche's elitism concerning morality when he states that preachers of morality try to make morality too accessible and thus devalue its power to shape people. Instead of trying to make morality democratic, which creates a low standard to get as many people "happy" with themselves (which it seems that utilitarianism would be Nietzsche's major target here), we should make morality something difficult to achieve in order to inspire heroic character. However, there is something more to Nietzsche's stance here than merely being an elitist and longing for heroic narratives. In §304, he states: "... ich bin dagegen jenen Moralen gut, welche mich antreiben, Etwas zu thun und wieder zu thun und von früh bis Abend, und Nachts davon zu träumen, und an gar Nichts zu denken als: diess gut zu thun, so gut als es eben mir allein möglich ist!" (KSA 3, 542). The value of morality, for Nietzsche, is that it is ultimately a conscious choice that shapes our actions in a way that we can affirm ourselves in the world, to actually carry out self-expression that we can say "yes" to. In order to do this, it must be recognized that it requires discipline to apply a moral structure as one encounters resistance both from the natural self and the world. Just as "Alles, was wir „höhere Cultur" nennen, beruht auf der Vergeistigung und Vertiefun der Grausamkeit" (KSA 5, 166), so does morality inflict some cruelty upon the self in that we must suffer the shaping process as we hold our natural inclinations accountable to this arbitrary structure. Thus, his major criticism of slave morality is that in its "no-saying" towards the noble, it retreats from the responsibility of

expressing itself in the world. Instead, its only expression is negation of others without any form of affirmation of what content it wishes to keep and shape. Thus, when he states “ich mag alle negativen Tugenden nicht, -- Tugendent, deren Wesen das Verneinen und Sichversagen selber ist” (KSA 3, 543), he attacks these “no-saying” moralities because they fail to turn around and put in the effort of “yes-saying” to give positive content to the moral subject.

The final element that tends to be misunderstood, according to Nietzsche, about morality is that in the process of encountering resistance, we must have the ability to play and a sense of humour that is able to compromise the ego to complete the process of self-expression. Although some regard Nietzsche as an egoist, there are many instances where he attacks the conceptual thinking that would make egoism feasible. In §354 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche puts forward an argument that not only is consciousness a collection of our pain and errors, but in connection to our linguistic ability, it is also a distinct awareness of what we are lacking to survive. Communication, according to Nietzsche, would not have arisen without a need, and it was our dependency on others that generated this need to formulate and express this dependence. Thus, we find that Nietzsche once again undermines Descartes by articulating a very different property about consciousness:

Bewusstsein ist eigentlich nur ein Verbindungsnetz zwischen Mensch und Mensch, -- nur als solches hat es sich entwickeln müssen: der einsiedlerische und raubthierhafte Mensch hätte seiner nicht bedurft...  
Mein Gedanke ist, wie man sieht: dass das Bewusstsein nicht eigentlich

zur Individual-Existenz des Menschen gehört, vielmehr zu dem, was an ihm Gemeinschafts- und Heerden-Natur ist;... (KSA 3, 591-2)

According to Descartes, consciousness is the unquestionable locus of the self, while Nietzsche says its entire function is based on establishing our relationship to others.<sup>62</sup> If I am lacking the capacity to fulfil a particular need by myself, I need the ability to bring this to the attention of others. Nietzsche elaborates here that consciousness as an evolved ability attempts to capture what is distressing the organism, to externalize it, so that it can then translate it back to the herd's perspective. Nietzsche holds that conscious thought and language are developed together rather than thought preceding language, and the articulation of our feelings is always for someone outside of us. Thus, earlier in §179, he notes that thoughts are never what they are trying to capture: "Gedanken sind die Schatten unserer Empfindungen, -- immer dunkler, leerer, einfacher, also diese" (KSA 3, 502). This would make sense if our thoughts are already taken from an externalized viewpoint, where sufficient distance from our feelings makes it easier to translate into linguistic symbols for others to comprehend. One interesting implication that arises from this is if our conscious thought in its structuring of content is for others, and morality itself is as an arbitrary conscious choice, even conscious egoism is unable to exclude the perspective of the other from its viewpoint. As was discussed in Chapter 1 about Schiller's treatment of egoism, Nietzsche doesn't think that conscious individuals are able to escape having to consider the perspectives of others because it already views itself

---

<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that Nietzsche distinguishes consciousness from reason in this aphorism, and notes that we have only become partly conscious of reason. This would also explain why Nietzsche is against the idea of grounding morality in "reason", since this is also, at least in part, outside of conscious thought (KSA 3, 591).

from an estranged point of view.<sup>63</sup> Conscious egoism merely deemphasizes the content that connects the “*Ich*” to the perspective of others, but pure solipsism is not achievable from a conscious perspective.<sup>64</sup>

In this context, Nietzsche’s discussion of approaching morality as a personal problem rather than a formal philosophy in §345 may become a bit clearer, which indicates the importance of embodied play. Scholarly approaches of morality tend to strip out the content of one’s situation, thus approaching moral systems as “objective” and “selfless” in order to apply to a large number of people. Yet if we are taking out the content of our conscious experiences, this results in us taking out the other perspectives and obstacles that generated conscious thought in the first place. The “self” that philosophers try to remove in this mode of philosophizing is actually a product of trying to connect to others, and thus results practically in an isolation of the self. Thus, “Die „Selbstlosigkeit“ hat keinen Werth im Himmel und auf Erden; die grossen Probleme verlangen alle die grosse Liebe, und dieser sind nur die starken, runden, sicheren Geister fähig, die fest auf sich selber sitzen” (*KSA 3, 577*). In order to really engage with others in a moral way, we should not move in the direction of removing conscious content and placating ourselves with formal models. Instead, we should face agitation and embrace the uncertainty of other perspectives, thus risking our ego in the process. In §109,

---

<sup>63</sup> I believe that Nietzsche is having some humour with this insight in §195 (“Zum Lachen!”) when he notes: “Er läuft von den Menschen weg--: diese aber folgen im nach, weil er vor ihnen herläuft, -- so sehr sind sie Heerde!” (*KSA 3, 505*). Even conscious action, especially if we articulate it, to move away from the herd often drags it along with us.

<sup>64</sup> In §162, Nietzsche writes: “Egoismus ist das perspectivische Gesetz der Empfindung, nach dem das Nächste gross und schwer erscheint: während nach der Ferne zu alle Dinge an Grösse und Gewicht abnehmen” (*KSA 3, 498*). Although there is distance, conscious egoism is never able to isolate itself from others.

Nietzsche warns about the temptation of thinking teleologically about the cosmos, whether the universe is thought of as a machine or as a giant organism (I believe the early Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is the target in the criticism of the later). Although he thinks that organic life is an inspiring example of order in our universe, it is a mistake to take it as either omnipresent and/or uniform. Instead, he notes that this type of order is actually the exception, having arrived rather late on the scene while being surrounded by chaos. In addition, it is quite hasty to assume that there is only one "order" of organic life, and thus assuming that there is a totality that can be brought into view is an anthropomorphic mistake that causes us to collapse the diversity of organic forms. It is here that Nietzsche states an ontological premise of his perspectivism. As Alexander Nehamas argues in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Nietzsche's perspectivism is not a relativist position where perspectives are disconnected from one another so that each individual is in their own monad of reality. To say that one has *merely* a perspective, or *merely* an interpretation of the world, is to neglect the fact that this perspective arises from the necessary conditions of embodiment, and some perspectives are more responsive to those conditions (Nehamas 50-2). Christian Emden supports Nehamas' interpretation, supplementing this interpretation with Nietzsche's deep interest in biology and physiology. As such, each perspective is grounded in the organic order of its own life, with self-organizing principles that brush up against the self-organizing principles of other life forms (Emden 139-41). Nehamas emphasizes that we do not choose a perspective at will, nor do we have the luxury of ignoring those perspectives that we come across if they clash with ours. What perspectivism emphasizes is that no one has a privileged position where the order of one perspective gives a totality of all the other

perspectives involved. Each perspective is its own ordering of life, and as such it is undetermined beforehand how perspectives will interact and modify, dominate, merge, etc. (Nehamas 50-1). We see this openness to indeterminacy and diversity later in §143 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, where Nietzsche discusses the reason why he sees polytheism as an advantageous outlook compared to monotheism. Polytheism approaches the world embracing its own set of norms while accepting other forms of morality. The monotheist, on the other hand, must attain the transcendental viewpoint and be the only morality of custom (*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*), thus having to negate all others that would stray from its form of life. Organically this is a real danger to humanity, since “da drohte ihr jener vorzeitige Stillstand, welchen, so weit wir sehen können, die meisten anderen Thiergattungen schon längst erreicht haben;...” (KSA 3, 490-1). Although other animals, according to Nietzsche, reached a conformity of the species in terms of custom, humanity has continued its flourishing, especially in the development of consciousness, due to the plurality of perspectives that encounter each other. The lack of a transcendental viewpoint allows for growth and adaptation in new circumstances. This flourishing, however, seems to be once again grounded in his understanding of physiology, where new organic orders arise from the unpredictable encounters of different self-organizing principles.

The fact that the outcome of two self-organizing principles encountering each other is unpredictable makes play and laughter necessary parts of the process as we engage others, since the achievement of organic unity must always include some compromise. Nietzsche argues in §327 that it is an ingrained prejudice that we are to take matters of intelligence seriously, and thus if laughter is present with a thought, it is

not taking the matter seriously. Just a few aphorisms later, in §333, Nietzsche unfolds what he thinks is the process of understanding, going against Tacitus' phrase "Non ridere, non lugere, neque destari, sed intelligere!". Instead of setting intelligence apart from laughter, lamenting, and despising, he states that understanding is a culmination of becoming conscious of all these three different impulses. In order to "understand" a particular matter, one must approach the object of inquiry with each lens, and specifically noticing how each impulse conflicts with the others. Eventually, when reconciliation is found between these different impulses where each reach a suitable relationship amongst each other, in a type of Platonic justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) or treaty (*Vertrag*), then the conflict surfaces to consciousness. Yet Nietzsche insists that much of the process involving this reconciliation is unconscious, and the conscious awareness of understanding arrives once we reach a point of exhaustion of the conflict, where the impulses are subjugated in some form of harmony that is acceptable.<sup>65</sup> It seems as though in the background of this model of unconscious struggle, Nietzsche is influenced by Wilhelm Roux's work concerning the self-regulation of organisms and the inner organic struggle that occurs between cellular systems in *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus*. Without relying on teleological thinking, Roux attempted to explain how organic systems establish self-regulation through internal subjugation and assimilation. As Lukas Soderstrom argues in "Nietzsche as a Reader of Wilhelm Roux, or the Physiology of

---

<sup>65</sup> Martin Leibscher argues in "Friedrich Nietzsche's Perspectives on the Unconscious" that one cannot arrive at a consistent understanding of the unconscious in Nietzsche due to the numerous impulses that one must account for, and therefore doesn't see any ground for an unconscious base. However, Christian Emden argues that this type of interpretation ignores that fact that the unconscious does have a physiological base, and we must look at the body as a necessary, although not sufficient, condition of consciousness (138-9).

History”, Nietzsche saw Roux’s explanations of organic purposefulness as an important resource because it explained how the inner struggle of diverse parts could result in the tenuous harmonies that we see in complex life (Soderstrom 58-61). Assimilation was a particular focus for Nietzsche in his reading of Roux, where every subjugated part maintains some ability to resist and maintain differentiation from the whole (Soderstrom 63). This form of assimilation, which prevents collapse into an indifferent unity, makes the body adaptive and an important interface with the world.<sup>66</sup> As Soderstrom notes:

The world, as Nietzsche understood it, is chaotically devoid of any intrinsic properties or attributes, and exists as a differentiated whole only insofar as it is able to affect the subject through the body... The body is the basis of our relation to the world inasmuch as it is able to receive something foreign into itself. Therefore, physiology’s description of the body’s intussusceptive capacity, which predetermines the ways that the world may affect us, marks the body as philosophically important.

(Soderstrom 64-5)

Just as Schiller and Schelling struggled to explain how harmony was possible within unified, yet internally differentiated, organic life, whether at the level of the individual, polis, or cosmos, Nietzsche also attempts to provide such insights in how a unified self arises in the dynamics of becoming. As such, he found Roux’s discoveries of how the body incorporates and differentiates a self-organized system to be a crucial part to his understanding of the organic.

---

<sup>66</sup> For other analyses of how Roux influenced Nietzsche, see Barbara Stiegler’s *Nietzsche et la biologie* (especially pages 32-44) and Gregory Moore’s *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor* (especially pages 37-45).

Given that this organic self is always in a process of tenuously reaching new internal harmonies as it interacts with the world, there requires a play concept that allows the ego to flexibly shift how it interprets the self.<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche notes that the “higher men” of Germany lack an important instrument of education (“Erziehungsmittel”), which is laughter (KSA 3, 501). Nietzsche noted that lamenting and despising are important parts to understanding, but laughter is one that Nietzsche focuses on as the real tragedy of modern European culture as it declines into nihilism. Critique and loss of self-control are integral in the process of organic growth in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. In §305, the loss of self-control is necessary because one must open up to the world in order to take in the unknown. Thus, “man muss sich auf Zeiten verirren können, wenn man den Dingen, die wir nicht selber sind, Etwas ablernen will” (KSA 3, 543). To view otherness from a distance is not a sufficient way to learn for Nietzsche, since it *really* fails to deal with the multi-faceted aspects of the world. Learning about the world requires a risk to the self, just as the organic harmony of the body is always at risk of unravelling when it takes in foreign objects of its environment. Yet the loss of the former ego is what is necessary for new interpretations of the self to emerge:

Jetzt erscheint dir Etwas als Irrthum, das due ehemals als eine Wahrheit  
oder Wahrscheinlichkeit geliebt hast: du stösst es von dir ab und wähnst,  
dass deine Vernunft darin einen Sieg erfochten habe. Aber vielleicht war  
jener Irrthum damals, als du noch *ein Anderer* warst – *du bist immer ein*

---

<sup>67</sup> For other scholars who have argued that a play concept is active in Nietzsche’s philosophy, see Eugen Fink’s *Nietzsches Philosophie*, Babette Babich’s “Nietzsche’s Artists’ Metaphysics and Fink’s Ontological World Play”, and D.N. Lambrellis’ “Beyond the Moral Interpretation of the World: The World as Play: Nietzsche and Heraclitus”.

*Anderer* –, dir ebenso nothwendig wie alle deine jetzigen „Wahrheiten“, gleichsam als eine Haut, die dir Vieles verhehlte und verhüllte, was du noch nicht sehen durftest... Wenn wir Kritik üben, so ist es nichts Willkürliches und Unpersönliches, -- es ist, wenigstens sehr oft, ein Beweis davon, dass lebendige treibende Kräfte in uns da sind, welche eine Rinde abstossen. Wir verneinen und müsen verneinen, weil Etwas in uns leben und sich bejahen will, Etwas, das wir vielleicht noch nicht kennen, noch nicht sehen!... (KSA 3, 544-5) [emphasis mine]

Critique is not something one can do at a distance, but rather it is something that is self-transformative. It requires us to detach from the very thoughts that construct our view of the world. In what I emphasize in the passage above, Nietzsche is asserting that we are constantly changing into an other, and it is not fruitful to trivialize the errors of our past selves because these were integral to who we were at that point. Yet the metaphor of shedding skin as our consciousness transforms is telling, since it relies on a constant regeneration of internal forces that surface in a new conscious appearance. As such, this is why I would argue that Nietzsche is reliant on a play concept in the background of this process, since play itself is a form of consciousness that engages its activity in a serious manner, and yet can depart from it once it is finished from this form of consciousness (along with the configuration of rules concerning the world that structured it) because it has set boundaries around that consciousness. This coincides with the definition of Johan Huizinga's definition that established play studies in *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga 28), although the play concept is more pervasive in human life for Nietzsche than what Huizinga was even willing to allow. This dynamic provides a bit more context when

Nietzsche scatters in references to play in *Jenseit von Gut und Böse*, such as when he states that maturity comes when we rediscover play in §94<sup>68</sup> or that important concepts are eventually left behind like toys to be taken up by other concepts that will eventually be left behind:

Vielleicht war Alles, woran das Auge des Gesinded seinen Scharfsinn und Tiefsinn geübt hat, eben nur ein Anlass zu seiner Übung, eine Sache des Spiels, Etwas für Kinder und Kindsköpfe. Vielleicht erscheinen uns einst die feierlichsten Begriffe, um die am meisten gekämpft und gelitten worden ist, die Begriffe „Gott“ und „Sünde“, nicht wichtiger, als dem alten Manne ein Kinder-Spielzeug und Kinder-Schmerz erscheint, -- und vielleicht hat dann, der alte Mensch“ wieder ein andres Spielzeug und einen andren Schmerz nöthig, -- immer noch Kinds genug, ein ewiges Kind! (KSA 5, 75)

Although we may take our present worldview, and all the various concepts that make it up, with great seriousness, most of us can look back at beliefs that were held with great seriousness that we've transitioned out of. Nietzsche emphasizes that as we transition from these older concepts to newer concepts, the older concepts that we were playing with were important for us as we transition into the newer worldview that is also a play space. There is no point that Nietzsche thinks that we actually leave the activity of play, since all conscious perspectives are combination of truth and untruth.

However, Nietzsche doesn't want the realization that we are at play to cause an end to the game, where the drive for "Truth" and certainty shuts down the embodied play

---

<sup>68</sup> "Reife des Mannes: das heisst den Ernst wiedergefunden haben, den man als Kind hatte, beim Spiel" (KSA 5, 90)

of the self. There is a constant dance to keep the self together as it interfaces with the fluctuations of the world, and is always in danger of disintegrating under the weight of the world. As Alexander Nehamas points out, “becoming what one is” is a constant process of bringing oneself into harmony, and new experiences are always a danger to self because “any new event may prove impossible to unify, at least without further effort, with the self into which one has developed” (Nehamas 185). The body, although an important basis for the organic self, is not a sufficient guarantee that the organism remains unified in its impulses when confronted with new experiences (Nehamas 181). Thus, when Nietzsche states that the truth and untruth are both important for life to move forward, we need to consider how fiction becomes an important part of conscious thought to keep the self unified. Robert Pippin provides an interesting approach to this issue in *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*, where he points out that the deeper implication of Nietzsche’s “self-deception” is that “self-knowledge is not observational but interpretive and, let us say, always promissory, futural, as complexly interpretive as the interpretive question of just what it is that is being done...” (Pippin 101). Self-knowledge, according to Pippin, is always incomplete and in certain ways fictitious, since it involves a part of understanding ourselves that is in the process of becoming. The ego projects itself into the future of what it hopes to be, and thus is a fiction in that it has not been fulfilled. This interpretation would go in line with §344 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, where Nietzsche states that even science itself has untruth integrated within it as a worldview, led by a regulative fiction (*einer regulativen Fiktion*), because its very precept that wills towards truth, and thus to not deceive, itself is a morality. In addition, science demands that this morality to be applied to the world, to reveal itself, when it is in

its very nature “unmoral” (*unmoralisch*) (KSA 3, 574-7). However, Nietzsche isn’t degrading science in pointing out this tension of the scientific worldview, but rather to show that “diese Ueberzeugung könnte nicht entstanden sein, wenn Wahrheit und Unwahrheit sich beide fortwährend als nützlich bezeigten: wie es der Fall ist” (KSA 3, 576). Instead of choosing between truth and untruth, Nietzsche’s perspectivism requires that we accept both, since no perspective is able to obtain a total perspective of the world nor is it disconnected from the world and other viewpoints. In addition, and I believe that this is more important to Nietzsche, the diversity of perspectives come from the ability of weaving truth and untruth together to create a vital organic force in the world, where continuous movement is necessary to prevent decadence.

Therefore, it isn’t surprising that art would be an element of human life that Nietzsche would look to as a demonstration of the importance of this embodied play. Like Schiller, Nietzsche seems to be weary of the bourgeois commodification of art, which at the preface of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* he exclaims “eine Kunst für Künstler, nur für Künstler!” (KSA 3, 351). Nietzsche seems to be marking art as an activity here, where the enjoyment of art (at least what Nietzsche wants to call “art”) comes from the enjoyment of the artists rather than the audience who consumes the artwork. Specifically, he states that art brings with it *Heiterkeit*, meaning “cheeriness”, “hilariousness”, or “exhilaration”, just to name a few translations. Nietzsche tends to advocate the arts as a place that actually engages in semblance, and thus challenges some of the traditional metaphysical approaches of how philosophers try to live in the world through the creation of a second world. In §78, Nietzsche states that artistic works, such as theatre, provides a semblance that allows us to explore the multiplicity within us,

where we see the internal struggles of our unconscious impulses play out before us. This world of art allows us to gain the complexity that is gained when we create metaphysical worlds, but the semblance of art doesn't require a constant "deception" when we walk away from the work. Thus, he states: "Ohne jene Kunst würden wir Nichts als Vordergrund sein und ganz und gar im Banne jener Optik leben, welche das Nächste und Gemeinste als ungeheuer gross und als die Wirklichkeit an sich erscheinen lässt" (KSA 3, 434). The ability to play with the semblance of the aesthetic allows enough "no-saying" towards the perspective one has of the world to provide some critical distance, thus opening up the possibility of transforming one's conscious thought. However, it doesn't cause such distance that one retreats from the world, having to construct a second world to explain the first. Thus in §54, Nietzsche claims that semblance (*Schein*) is itself the place of activity and living, and the important aspect of engaging this semblance is learning the knowledge to extend the "earthly dance" ("den irdischen Tanz") of existence (KSA 3, 417). Also, in §57 and §58, Nietzsche asserts that one must achieve the consciousness that realizes that asserting a metaphysical reality behind the appearance is a problematic endeavour, and that how we organizing our reality through naming is far more important for living in the world rather than grabbing some underlying essence. The attempt to set aside semblance ultimately sets aside the very content that we want to engage with, and as artists we can only work with the material the world provides us (KSA 3, 421-2).

The other important aspect that Nietzsche embraces in the artist is the ability to accept the necessary parts of the creative process, including the violence and suffering of resistance to one's will. In §276, he states: "Ich will immer mehr lernen, das

Nothwendige an den Dingen als das Schöne sehen: -- so werde ich Einer von Denen sein, welche die Dinge schön machen. Amor fati: das sei von nun an meine Liebe!" (KSA 3, 521). The ability to see beauty in the necessary requires that we become "yes-sayers" to the world, and accepting all parts of existence. This includes the suffering that is integral to our process of desiring and the resistance in realizing those desires in the material world. Yet this acceptance of what is necessary doesn't make us unavoidably spectators of life. Nietzsche asserts in §301 that those who try to aim for the contemplative life, although their thoughtful awareness does enrich one's perceptions, often forget the ways that they are actually authors of their lives. One certainly can use one's *vis contemplativa* to look back at one's work and bring out new meanings, but this neglects *vis creativa* that allows us to play with the semblance of life. This power is lacking in the one who is unable to contemplate on one's life, and is only available to those who think about the semblance they encounter. Yet Nietzsche points out that the artist is in a constant dance of affirming and negating parts of the semblance, shaping it in the ways that it will bend to make it a work of the self. Although this may seem to come into tension with his earlier discussion of *Amor Fati*, Reginster points out that part of creation is always affirming the state of affairs that one must destroy in order to bring about something new (Reginster 246). Just as we must accept a block of marble before we can shape it into a statue or the physical limits of one's body before choreographing a dance piece, the past is always something we must accept before we narrate out of the organic conditions that ground our perspective. Given that the artist is able to bring works of art out of these conditions, he thinks that she is a good example of how we should approach our lives generally.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I would like to explore Nietzsche's figure of the child as a recurring theme that often signals an ideal of Zarathustra's teachings, and to see how this figure links up with themes that I've already explored earlier in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Jenseit von Gut und Böse*, and *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Although there are some who recognize the importance of the child, there is also the puzzling aspect of how the figure of the child is treated at the end of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. I argue that in order for us to understand the child in light of Nietzsche's system, we must not look at the child through the typical cultural lens as a figure that "returns" to a state that we hold in nostalgia, but rather we must see through the lens of the child the attitude that makes overcoming a possibility. What is typical is that we often belittle the achievements and endeavours of the child because we often see play as whimsical and capricious, forgetting that the child takes its struggle very seriously in its attempts to overcome its obstacles. In a society that has become cold and indifferent in its seriousness, Zarathustra wants to point out that it is the child who ultimately confronts suffering, affirms its existence, and does not have the dangers of slipping into nihilism.

In "Von den drei Verwandlungen", Zarathustra explains that there are three major transformations of the spirit, moving from the heaviest to the lightest. First, the spirit becomes a camel, which has the strength of bearing the weight of various demands: "Was ist das schwereste, ihr Helden? so fragt der tragsame Geist, dass ich es auf mich nehme und meiner Stärke froh werde" (KSA 4, 29). The burdens that the camel takes on willingly are of an ascetic nature, where the camel wants to prove its strength by suffering the obstacles of the earth and human society. Nietzsche praises the camel's ability to suffer that allows it to have direction, which is more than those of the herd who

move back and forth due to pleasures and pains. Yet the camel's direction is chosen by the burdens that it passively receives, not by its own accord. Thus, the transformation of the lion is the next step, and this figure is characterized by its willingness to fight for its freedom. It searches alone in the dessert:

Seinen letzten Herrn sucht er sich hier: feind will er ihm werden und  
seinem letzten Gotte, um Sieg will er mit dem grossen Drachen ringen.  
Welches ist der grosse Drache, den der Geist nicht mehr Herr und Gott  
heissen mag? „Du-sollst“ heisst der grosse Drache. Aber der Geist des  
Löwen sagt „ich will“. (KSA 4, 30)

Unlike the camel, the lion actively rejects the demands that the world places upon it, and in fact goes out to destroy these possible sources of gravity. No longer willing to bear the suffering that it once did as a camel, the spirit instead invests its energy in liberating itself through this destructive aggression. However, when it succeeds in ridding itself of its masters, this “I will” becomes empty, since its only real drive has been the destruction of value. The lion, unfortunately, is incapable of constructing values once it has wiped away the external demands.

In order to create value, the spirit must then make the final transformation into the child. The lion has cleared the space for the spirit to create, but it has been in the process of saying “no” to everything, and thus the child plays the opposite role of saying “yes” in its process of creating value. In a list, the child is described by Nietzsche as “Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen” (KSA 4, 31). Thus, the child owns her values because she has created them and can identify with them, unlike the camel who

receives its values from the outside and the lion who only destroys value. The image of the wheel rolling out of itself is important in that the child's direction is determined by its own will rather than out of physical inertia. I will later argue that we must not overemphasize his discussion of the child being "innocence and forgetting", but these attributes are important in that the child does not feel the weight that the camel bears. I think it is important to note that from what Zarathustra says here, there is nothing that states what the camel bears cannot be taken up by the child, but what is characteristically different in this appropriation is that the child says "yes" to it rather than asking "what should I carry?" By engaging in this play of creation, we see the result of this final transformation, by which Zarathustra ends the speech.

In Laurence Lampert's *Nietzsche's Teachings*, this speech is treated in such a way to make the transformation of the child into something rather unimportant in relation to the rest of the book. Lampert argues that to interpret the child as the final transformation is to abuse the text, since it takes this speech out of context and neglects other pieces of textual evidence. He states: "That it is no such final word is clear from Zarathustra's own subsequent transformations. According to the old saint (Prologue 2) Zarathustra has already been transformed into a child" (Lampert 35). Lampert instead wants to read this speech as merely an introductory set of transformations, noting that Zarathustra will undergo several different kinds of transformations that do not neatly fit into the narrative of this speech. He specifically brings out Zarathustra's first realization of the eternal recurrence in Part III, Speech 2 ("Vom Gesicht und Räthsel"), where we see a profound shift in Zarathustra's attitude. Given this line of argument, Lampert relegates any significance of the child only to the first part of *Zarathustra*, and much of Lampert's

treatment of the child figure is that of a character who only moves the plot forward. In most cases, when the child is mentioned, Lampert attributes no symbolic significance and gives it no treatment, and it is this initial argument concerning the first speech that he rationalizes this move.

This interpretation runs into problems, however, when we consider the fact that Zarathustra is in constant search for his children, and we even get moments where Zarathustra does not identify himself as a child while in this search. In “Das Zeichen” of Part IV, we see the appearance of the lion as Zarathustra is puzzled by the sensations of a tremendous transformation. He suddenly sees this as the sign that his children are near: “Wohlan! Der Löwe kam, meine Kinder sind nahe, Zarathustra ward reif, meine Stunde kam: -- Dieses ist mein Morgen, mein Tag hebt an: herauf nun, herauf, du grosser Mittag!” (KSA 4, 408). As Zarathustra becomes “ripe”, we see the imagery return to that of the child. Zarathustra arrives at a new beginning, just as the child marks the first movement. The fact that his children have not arrived yet, and that he seeks them out all the way up until the end of the work, problematizes Lampert’s interpretation of trying to downplay the symbolism of the child. Lampert may try to respond that just because these children have not arrived for Zarathustra in Part IV does not mean that Zarathustra himself has not been a child. However, even in Part II, Zarathustra makes a sharp delineation between him and the children by stating “Ein Gelehrter bin ich den Kindern noch” (KSA 4, 160). This recognition is made within the context that the scholars are burdened with their desire to be objective and to be proponents of the “common good” while the children are innocent and play outside. It is puzzling that Zarathustra makes

this statement, since the scholar is characterized as someone who has over-processed life to such a point that life has become stagnant, dusty, and no longer nourishing:

Greift man sie mit Händen, so stäuben sie um sich gleich Mehlsäcken, und unfreiwillig: aber wer erriethe wohl, dass ihr Staub vom Korne stammt und von der gelben Wonne der Sommerfelder? (*KSA* 4, 161)

The process of making grain into flour shows that the scholars have a connection to the outside world, but the artificiality of their product makes Zarathustra recoil. The scholar carries out her burden in hopes of finding objectivity, and she breaks down the world around her with her critical eye, yet she remains trapped at this point because there isn't any "yes-saying" taking place. The scholar does not embrace the earth, but remains indifferent to it. Thus, why does Zarathustra describe himself as a scholar in relation to the children? I would argue that this is in fact a confession on Zarathustra's part of not having completed the spiritual transformation, in which he could then be a "yes-sayer" himself. His critical eye towards others still weighs a certain burden on him,<sup>69</sup> while the children play outside. Interestingly enough, Zarathustra does not play with the children, although he admits he likes to lay in their presence. These are indications that Zarathustra has not achieved the state of the child, although he recognizes it as the goal for overcoming himself.

Another argument against Lampert's interpretation is that the sacred ability of "yes-saying" is only attributed to the child until the speech "Vor Sonnen-Aufgang" in Part III. It is only at this point that Zarathustra recognizes within himself the ability to affirm, but there is one qualification he makes about his achievement of this ability: "Ich

---

<sup>69</sup> At the end of the work, we discover this burden is his pity for the higher men, which he then goes through the final transformation once he lets this go (*KSA* 4, 408).

aber bin ein Segnender und ein Ja-sager, wenn du um mich bist, du Reiner! Lichter! Du Licht-Abgrund! – in alle Abgründe trage ich da noch mein segnendes Ja-sagen” (KSA 4, 208-9). Here Zarathustra is referring to the sun, which has a specific way of loving and saying “yes” to the Earth. In returning back to the speech “Von den Gelehrten”, as well as the speech right before “Von der unbefleckten Erkenntniss”, Zarathustra’s criticisms of the cold way of embracing the Earth is counterbalanced by his description of “solar love” (*Sonnen-Liebe*):

Seht doch hin, wie sie ungeduldig über das Meer kommt! Fühlt ihr den

Durst und den heißen Athem ihrer Liebe nicht?

Am Meere will sie saugen und seine Tiefe zu sich in die Höhe trinken: da

hebt sich die Begierde des Meeres mit tausend Brüsten. (KSA 4, 159)

Unlike the scholars, whose touch upon the Earth is like the light of the moon that has no real impression upon what it sees, the sun permeates what it observes with its own passion and can be felt. This “solar love” is what gives Zarathustra the power to say “yes” in “Vor Sonnen-Aufgang”, but he still is reliant upon the sun for this ability. This contingency of the “sacred yes-saying” is not attributed to the child, and thus we see a weakness that Zarathustra is trying to overcome. Zarathustra is not a child, but we see him striving after its ability. Thus, perhaps when the old saint states that Zarathustra has become a child, we should not be quick to conclude that Zarathustra has already gone through the proper transformation into the child. In fact, we never hear Zarathustra state that he has become or ever was a child, but this identification is coming from the outside from someone who has lost his hope in humanity. It may be that the old saint mistakes Zarathustra as a child because of the direction Zarathustra is heading, since the old saint

is sceptical that man could ever be redeemed. Therefore, this could explain the old saint's comment that Zarathustra has become a child, while avoiding the conclusions that Lampert makes.

The second approach to the figure of the child has been to embrace this figure as the final transformation and goal of Zarathustra, but many have emphasized the "forgetful and innocence" qualities of the child. In *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra: Before Sunrise*, James Luchte interprets the three metamorphoses as a recovering of innocence, where the child is the end result of this process. Although Luchte does acknowledge the various characteristics listed by Nietzsche, he decides to bring the first two together in his interpretation, where innocence is a forgetting of the past. The reason for this interpretation is that Luchte sees it impossible for one to be truly creative and free without a radical break from the past. He argues that: "nothing is really *created* and the products of one's will remain only reworking of the tradition or, as is the case with the lion, destructive engagements with it which are parasitic upon it" (Luchte 71). Luchte adopts a romantic conception of creativity, where originality is one of the key components. Luchte then weaves this into his understanding of "yes-saying", and thus the radical break, the complete separation from history, becomes necessary. Ultimately, this interpretation sees creativity as combining two major forces: the destructiveness of the lion and the creative play that comes from the child (Luchte 137). Due to the clearing provided by the lion's hunting, the child is able to build its own values without it borrowing from the past. Thus, for Luchte's child to be life affirming, it appears that one must be original.

We see the conflation of innocence and forgetfulness also in Stephen Byrum's "The Concept of Child's Play in Nietzsche's 'Of the Three Metamorphoses'". While explaining the major characteristics of playfulness that he thinks Nietzsche is appealing to, Byrum asserts that playfulness must take place within a space that has eradicated the past (132). His argument for this is that in order for the moment to be original and new, it must not have any association with a previous event. As it is posed in this account, play can only take place when there is a complete lack of memory, since the burden of history would taint the creativity of act. Thus, taking innocence as naivety, Byrum incorporates this as a major characteristic of play because he wants to see the playfulness of the child as a naïve and immediate engagement with the current experience (131). This will fall into problems when we later look at another characteristic of child's play, but this break with one's history is also quite problematic in just standard play theory. Play requires a great deal of learning from past experiences and traditions in order to create new methods and activities. Although I do not fully dismiss the role of forgetfulness, many of these accounts emphasize it in conjunction with innocence that makes it seem quite out of balance. It is this imbalance in Luchte and Byrum's accounts that makes Nietzsche's child seem utopian and highly unrealistic.

One major problem I see with these two accounts, particularly Luchte's, is that both work very hard to incorporate the destructive will of the lion and the yes-saying of the child, yet at the same time cast out the positive elements of the camel. I think it is possible to interpret this speech so that the camel provides a necessary element into the child's ability to play rather than something to reject. It is true that the lion can be read as hostile to the life of the camel, but the lion is also negative in that it can only say "no" to

the world. Therefore, it is not clear why the camel's ability to bear the weight of certain tasks, to uphold certain values, must be disregarded in the stage of the child. The creative reading of Richard Perkins in "The Genius and the Better Player: Superman and the Elements of Play", which looks at play in "On the Three Metamorphoses", is an example of how the camel can be incorporated as a third positive element in the process of play. Perkins constructs a triad of play elements: innocence, freedom, and power. Interestingly enough, Perkins associates innocence with the camel, given that it is open to the outside world and takes on what will be given to it. We get a nuanced view of innocence as it is connected to forgetfulness, since forgetfulness here is tied to a forgetting of the self rather than of the environment. Therefore, the camel is recognized as a saintly figure, and has its place in how play is carried out (Perkins 16). Freedom is attributed to the lion, the philosopher that critically unravels value with her critical eye because it seeks to fight every master it can possibly find above it. Finally, power is attributed to the child, the artist who is able to create value. Thus, Perkins concludes that: "The camel is the ultimate lover and saint. The lion is the ultimate knower and philosopher. The child is the ultimate creator and artist" (17). The camel is important in that it loves what it takes on, and thus is able to learn the fastest and is able to sustain direction. This counterbalances the destructive and capricious nature of the lion that could possibly emerge from the child. In pulling from the *Nachlaß*, Perkins argues that these three elements were the "practical goal" of Nietzsche's project, to combine these elements in one person. If this is true, then there is a definite problem in leaving out the camel from the qualities of the child's activity.

Another issue that I have with the readings of Luchte and Byrum is that it does not take into account Nietzsche's strong critiques of the metaphysical assumptions made in philosophy concerning the environment and of free will. In *Jenseit von Gut und Böse*, as was noted earlier, this dichotomy of free will and determinism by one's environment is labelled as one of the major prejudices of the philosopher, and even goes so far to say that "free will" is an unnatural concept that has led to several confusions (KSA 5, 35-7). We also see this in the first part of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, where Nietzsche strongly questions whether or not we can hold someone culpable for an action given that they were not in control of that environment (KSA 2, 62-4). Thus, we must strongly question the assumption that creativity must be rooted in a radical break from tradition, since this appears to be lapsing back into this metaphysical prejudice. In assuming that nothing from the past is present in the *Übermensch* should strike any close reader of Nietzsche as odd. As Alan Richardson succinctly puts it in *Nietzsche's System*, "we should hear in Nietzsche's frequent use of *über-* compounds (e.g., 'over-man') that the prior has been 'taken up' into the new, not just replaced by it" (115). Richardson points out how accounts like Luchte's do not resonate well with Nietzsche's careful and artistic use of the German language, since there is a very linear way of thinking that reveals the very philosophical thinking that Nietzsche explicitly criticizes. In identifying what playfulness is in the child, we must not lapse into these old prejudiced ways of interpreting things.

Another difficulty that arises in the attempt to understand the role of the child is that the fourth part offers a very enigmatic comment, but I think this puzzling occurrence ultimately clarifies in certain ways how we should understand Zarathustra's children. In

“Das Eselfest”, Zarathustra chides the higher men for their practical joke that made him think they were worshipping the Ass. In this, he makes remarks that strike one as being negative about childhood:

Wie doch einem Jeden von euch das Herz zappelte vor Lust und  
Bosheit, darob, das ihr endlich wieder wurdet wie die Kindlein, nämlich  
fromm, --  
-- dass ihr endlich wider thatet wie Kinder thun, nämlich betetet,  
hände-faltetet und „lieber Gott” sagtet!” (KSA 4, 393)

The fact that he attributes piety to childish behaviour is curious, since he has attacked pious behaviour throughout the book. Religion is something to be overcome, yet it is then attributed to the child figure. He also adds that children want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, while men want the Kingdom of Earth, further enforcing the connection between the child and the religious. Yet very soon at the end of the book, he is ready to welcome the children he knows that are coming. This apparent contradiction should make us pause and reconsider our understanding of Nietzsche’s critique of religion, since it does lie at the heart of *Zarathustra*. In the very prologue, Zarathustra comes to the realization that God is dead, and goes to man to help him deal with this traumatic event. His criticism of the higher men for worshipping the Ass is perhaps not located in the playful behaviour, but that he sees it a return to older behaviour that was only appropriate for “yes-saying” when God was alive in the culture.<sup>70</sup> He notes that “Solcherlei erfinden

---

<sup>70</sup> In the context of *Thus Sprach Zarathustra*, I believe Zarathustra is cross about the joke because it was rooted in the belief that their behavior of worshipping the Ass would anger him like Moses’ reaction to the Israelites when worshipping the Golden Calf, betraying their assumption that Zarathustra is seeking religious followers. It is in this way that their play betrays the remnants of the older culture.

nur Genesende” (KSA 4, 394), thus indicating that pious behaviour is coming out of a sickness, but he adds that this particularly jovial affair that takes place in the cave is a good sign. They are experiencing the joy of creativity by mimicking what was once creative in the past, but Zarathustra wants children who can play games that are beyond this sickly time. Whether Zarathustra actually finds these children is left open in the text.

This event at the end of *Zarathustra* thus creates an important distinction between how we typically think about children and how Nietzsche is thinking about the “child”. Like Luchte and Byrum, we tend to think of the child from a nostalgic point of view, where we look back on our own childhood and romanticize this period of our life. We tend to think of this time (if one had a fortunate childhood) as a simplified time, whimsical, and trouble-free. As a cultural sentiment, many people would like to “go back” to this time because they think they were happier than they are now, which Rousseau’s own philosophical anthropology expresses this romantic view. Yet this conception of childhood is quite distorted, given that we are comparing it to our current perspective and experience, and it often belittles the child’s activities and achievements. In effect, we exoticize children because we feel so alienated from our current position, and we create a utopia that is never experienced by the children we are looking at. In actuality, the child does not take her world as simple, and she takes her play very seriously. The child is confronted with a number of uncertainties and anxieties, as well as a number of obstacles and limitations.<sup>71</sup> In transitioning out of infancy, the child overcomes a number of limitations of the body and is cognitively experimenting with her

---

<sup>71</sup> This particular line of thought will be developed in the next chapter on Sigmund Freud, which Freud develops his play concept through the perspective of trauma and frustration that is inherent in childhood.

surroundings. As Byrum points out, experimentation is a major element of play (130), yet such an undertaking requires that one has not forgotten one's past, but rather is able to narrate it in such a way to allow new experiences and conceptions of the world. To say that the child needs to radically break with her past and traditions in order to play and affirm life is highly problematic, since it is lapsing back into the very dichotomies Nietzsche is trying to dissolve. Thus, we have oversimplified the process of childhood, and have forgotten our authentic way of experiencing life.

Thus, for the spirit to transform into the child requires a radical shift in attitude in how we relate to our experiences and suffering. It certainly does not depend on age, since “[i]m ächten Manne ist ein Kind versteckt: das will spielen” (*KSA* 4, 85). Yet our nostalgic view of childhood often lulls us into forgetting the struggles that we once found as life affirming, and we then find ourselves in nihilism. We lose that sense of play that allowed us to overcome ourselves and to face the uncertainties of a full existence. As Reginster argues, and I am in agreement of this account, creativity for Nietzsche is the way we redeem our suffering in life, it is in fact a “revaluation of suffering”. In relation to the child, “the ‘pangs of childbirth’ refer to the suffering involved in the overcoming of resistance characteristic of creative activity, a form of suffering the truly creative individual welcomes” (Reginster 243). As we have seen in the triad of the camel, lion and child, creative acts are both destructive in that they must change the previous state of affairs and productive in bringing about a new state, and suffering is endured to bring this change into completion. Yet, “[d]ie Schaffenden nämlich sind hart” (*KSA* 4, 268), and they are willing to endure the suffering in their “sacred yes-saying” because they identify with the process of creation. Yet we must be careful not to become attached to the

product of this process: “Lust aber will nicht Erben, nicht Kinder, -- Lust will sich selber, will Ewigkeit, will Wiederkunft, will Alles-sich-ewig-gleich” (*KSA* 4, 402). Those who are creative merely for the product do not affirm themselves, since the product for them is an attempt at permanence and being. The eternal joy is only found in the process itself, and it is this moment that we can affirm as though it is the first moment. This letting go of permanence is what I think Nietzsche means by forgetting, and it is only then are we able to truly appreciate “becoming” as the way that we really live.

Therefore, in order for us to fully appreciate Nietzschean concepts like “overcoming”, “eternal recurrence” and “becoming”, we need to understand terms like “play” and “child”. As it is developed in his later work, Nietzsche utilizes a play concept in his idea of affirmation that aligns with Schiller’s concept of play as aesthetic semblance. In recognizing consciousness as a developing faculty, he emphasizes the need for an honest recognition of the limits of consciousness as a finite perspective, but the realization of this limit does not mean we should not take this perspective of our ego any less seriously within those boundaries. He also argues for this ego to be engaged with the world rather than recoiling from it, which it must try to overcome the limits it recognizes once it has critically separated itself off. In this engagement, the ego must embrace uncertainty, since any effort of creation in the world will run into resistance and the outcome is unpredictable in its complex details. The meaning of these actions, and the values underlying them, also remain uncertain in that they can never be grounded in the objective world, but rather are reliant on the way we affirm them (which this affirmation can always be revisited). Finally, this impulse to engage the world must come from an internal impulse rather than external one, which his new version of “yes-

saying” as the child differs from that of the camel because the child has gone through the process of saying “no” before reuniting with the world. Given how we have forgotten the struggles of childhood and the seriousness of play, we are more likely to approach the child with a dismissive attitude (like Lampert), or in terms of a nostalgic lens (like Luchte and Byrum). Philosophically, we see this nostalgia express itself in the return of old prejudices that Nietzsche time and again tried to point out as problematic throughout his work, and it is common to see in the literature on Nietzsche a search for stable conceptions of “free will”, “selfhood”, and “reality” that tremendously distorts the text. In forgetting about the process of play, it may be hard to see what Nietzsche is doing. As for those who are dismissive of play, I highly doubt Nietzsche is writing for those readers.

## CHAPTER 4

### Play as the Ambivalence of the Ego in Sigmund Freud's Metapsychology

Although Sigmund Freud is known for his work on the unconscious, it should be clear at this point that he was not the first to give attention to this concept or to attempt to integrate it into a model of the self.<sup>72</sup> However, Freud did work rigorously to understand the relationship of the unconscious and consciousness within a clinical setting, and theorized on what that relationship looks like dynamically. Therefore, we can see that we have come full circle in moving from Schiller to Freud in that we end with someone trained in the philosophy of medicine, and the concept of the psyche focuses on the integration of parts into a non-hierarchical harmony. However, it is reasonable to think that Freud also reconsidered the idea of the harmonious “*Ich*” in light of the tensions highlighted by Schelling and Nietzsche, especially when Freud makes a remarkable shift in his psychoanalytic theory in 1920 with *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. In this chapter, I argue that throughout a good portion of Freud's work, the concept of play remains a crucial concept when discussing the dynamics of the Ego, despite the major modifications we see starting in 1920. Although the shift in 1920 required Freud to rethink the various parts of the psyche and the tensions that were generated from this internal differentiation, Freud maintained an emphasis that the Ego does not become rigid by over-investing in one part over the rest. Thus, any psychoanalytic theory that ignores

---

<sup>72</sup> As I progress through the chapter, we will see that “self” becomes an increasingly problematic concept in Freud's work due to the various divisions and identifications that can occur in the psyche. Thus, to avoid vagueness, I will be referring to terms like “psyche”, “Ego” (*das Ich*), and “organism” (depending on context) instead of referring to a unified self. However, I will continue to use reflexive terms like “self-consciousness”, “self-mastery” and “self-awareness”.

this role of play within the psyche runs the danger of creating a rigid ego psychology that will fall into either neurosis or psychosis.

In order to establish this argument, I point out the notable shifts in Freud's discussion of play while showing that it still functions as an essential part of his concept of the Ego. I first discuss how Freud approached the unconscious, starting with his two essays "Die Verdrängung" and "Das Unbewußte" from 1915, and how his concept of the unconscious relies on issues of tension and alienation of consciousness. As such, we will then see how he makes significant changes to his theory, specifically focusing on how tension within the organism plays a much larger part than he had anticipated in these earlier essays. Second, I discuss Freud's account of the "Fort-Da Game", which accompanied this important shift of thinking in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. It is in this essay that Freud characterizes play as a type of strategy to deal with anxiety, and Jonathan Lear takes issue with this description of play because of Freud's focus on mastery. Thus, I look at how play is taken up in Freud's work before 1920, which often involves art when he looks at adults, and show how Freud's focus on the unconscious becoming conscious pervades in his view of play. Yet after 1920, I argue that the concept of play also undergoes important changes, even though it still remains implicitly central to the function of the Ego as it tries to bring unity to the psyche. As such, I end the chapter considering how play is crucial when we think of "self-mastery" within Freud's later thought, in particular having developed a mature imagination that is both self-aware and has moved away from the infantile desires for omnipotence and omniscience. As such, I am in agreement with the child psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott

that psychoanalysis is itself a complex version of play that aims to bring the psyche back into a tenuous harmony.

By the time Freud put forward “Die Verdrängung” and “Das Unbewußte” in 1915, he had been explicitly working with the concept of the unconscious for over fifteen years, starting with *Die Traumdeutung*. As Günter Götde points out in “Freud and nineteenth-century philosophical sources on the unconscious”, Freud’s first encounter with discussions of the unconscious date back to the 1870s in his secondary school training, having been taught Gustav Adolv Lindner’s textbooks on logic and psychology. Lindner had covered in these books the issue of the unconscious, arguing that there was an extensive amount of mental content that remained below the threshold of consciousness until it could overcome the resistance that suppressed it (Götde 266). Also, Freud partook in a reading group from 1873-8, the *Leseverein der deutschen Studenten Wiens*, and it is speculated that it is here where Freud would have been introduced to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which would have introduced him to the ideas of will being outside of rationality and connected to drives (Götde 266). Yet more importantly was the debate developing between a number of philosophical psychologists that aligned the unconscious with the psyche, such as Eduard von Hartmann, Gustav Wilhelm Jerusalem, Theodor Fechner, and Theodor Lipps, and physiologists and neurologists like Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke, Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz and Theodor Meynert who put forward materialist theories that explained the unconscious mechanically (Götde 276). We should also be aware of that Freud took courses from Franz Brentano while studying at the University of Vienna in the early 1870s, reinforcing his allegiance to the positivist movement (Tauber 29-30). Yet, as Matt Ffyché warns in

*The Foundation of the Unconscious*, one of the methodological issues of acknowledging these earlier discussions of the unconscious is their lack of consistency. Although Freud did not introduce the unconscious when he invented psychoanalysis, it is clear that Freud did stabilize the concept to the extent that yielded the unconscious as a possible object of study (Ffytche 11-5).<sup>73</sup> Thus, “Das Unbewußte” (1915) marked an important point in Freud’s work in that he focused an entire essay on clarifying this concept that was at the core of psychoanalysis.

Although the unconscious is the most crucial concept within psychoanalysis, it is also recognized as being the most controversial. Freud understands that one major task when writing about the unconscious is to provide the justification for this object of study. Thus, at the very beginning of his discussion, he states what makes psychoanalysis so controversial in the philosophical debate: “Man muß sich dann auf den Standpunkt stellen, es sei nichts anderes als eine unhaltbare Anmaßung, zu fordern, daß alles, was im Seelischen vorgeht, auch dem Bewußtsein bekannt werden müsse” (Freud *GW X*, 265).<sup>74</sup> Just as Nietzsche refused to usual move to define mental life through consciousness, Freud also denies this identity at the outset. Freud argues that this identity is often posited in philosophy as axiomatic, but this either begs the question or is arguing from a conventional definition without much reflection. This identity must be argued for, and

---

<sup>73</sup> For those interested in the connection between Freud and earlier philosophical sources of the unconscious, the following works are recommended: Martin S. Bergmann’s “The Jewish and German Roots of Psychoanalysis and the Impact of the Holocaust” (*Imago*, Vol. 52, No. 3, Fall 1995, pp. 243-51); Matt Ffytche’s, *The Foundations of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*; Odo Marquard’s *Transzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse*; and Lancelot Law Whyte’s *The Unconscious Before Freud*. See Bibliography.

<sup>74</sup> All citations from Freud’s work come from the *Gesammelte Werke* from Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, abbreviated as *GW* with the volume and page number.

Freud thinks that there is much more evidence for denying this equivalence rather than embracing it. For one thing, it is undeniable that thoughts and memories do not remain eternally present before consciousness, but rather go in and out of consciousness' sight without necessarily having the control to retrieve them. Dreams present content spontaneously brought to consciousness, and we observe actions carried out without conscious intent. Also, we have instances of artwork and utterances that reveal additional meanings to the creator herself after the fact. All of these instances that consciousness comes across points to, according to Freud, a mental life that exists outside of consciousness, and we gain an indirect awareness of it through these phenomena. One can see a similar dynamic here as the problem introduced by Kant's noumena in German Idealism, and just as Schelling pointed out that consciousness can become self-aware of its unconscious by bringing the products of the unconscious into a unity, so Freud thinks we need the concept of the unconscious to bring these conscious experiences of mental life into unity. For those who question the need for the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious, Freud replies:

Man darf antworten, die konventionelle Gleichstellung des Psychischen mit dem Bewußten ist durchaus unzweckmäßig. Sie zerreit die psychischen Kontinuitäten, stürzt uns in die unlösbaren Schwierigkeiten des psychophysischen Parallelismus, unterliegt dem Vorwurf, daß sie ohne einsichtliche Begründung die Rolle des Bewußtseins überschätzt, und nötigt uns, das Gebiet der psychologischen Forschung vorzeitig zu verlassen, ohne uns von anderen Gebieten her Entschädigung bringen zu können. (*GW X*, 266)

Without this concept in place, any psychological research will fragment apart into mere empirical observations of thoughts, actions, and perceptions. The unconscious serves as the theoretical glue that makes the entire empirical program possible, even if the unconscious is never rendered as an object in time and space. Also, unless we wish to embrace Cartesian dualism, we must be ready to accept that there is some manner in which the mental extends into the unconscious body, which materialists acknowledge that we can identify (whether by behaviour, function, or strict-identity) that the brain and the mind can be linked without the subject knowing much, if any, of the physical state of their brain. Although it is acknowledged that this may be an uncomfortable realization as we apply this insight to ourselves, Freud points out that we infer mental life beyond our own ego all the time. When I look at the behaviour of another person, I do not deny the assumption that there is mental life even if it remains hidden from my own consciousness. Instead, I take all of the products of that other consciousness that come to my view and make them cohere in a theory of mind that I posit behind my observations. Therefore, the psychoanalytic unconscious is merely an extension of this theory of mind: “Die Psychoanalyse fordert nun nichts anderes, als daß dieses Schlußverfahren auch gegen die eigne Person gewendet werde, wozu eine konstitutionelle Neigung allerdings nicht besteht” (*GW X*, 268). Although it may not be a natural move for us to turn this inductive thinking inwards, it does seem to be the next logical move when we look closely at the mental activity of the psyche.

However, Freud makes note that the unconscious should not be thought of as the mirror image of consciousness. Although some may try to refute Freud’s concept of the unconscious by positing a second consciousness within one’s mental life that accounts for

the issues that the unconscious was suppose to answer while keeping the mental from having an unconscious element, this route tends to fall into even deeper problems than psychoanalysis. Although there are clinical observations where more than one consciousness is operating within an individual that work independently of each other, there is nothing new concerning this second consciousness that keeps us from running into the same conceptual problems that motivates the psychoanalyst to theorize an unconscious mental life. In fact, it seems as though we would have an infinite regress, having to posit a third consciousness to explain the incompleteness of the second consciousness, and so on. Thus, if we are to conceptualize the unconscious, it must be different from the structure of consciousness:

Wie Kant uns gewarnt hat, die subjektive Bedingtheit unserer  
Wahrnehmung nicht zu übersehen und unsere Wahrnehmung nicht für  
identisch mit dem unerkennbaren Wahrgenommenen zu halten, so mahnt  
die Psychoanalyse, die Bewußtseinswahrnehmung nicht an die Stelle des  
unbewußten psychischen Vorganges zu setzen, welcher ihr Objekt ist.  
(*GW X*, 270)

Just as it would be a mistake in Kant's philosophy to think of noumena as merely unseen versions of the phenomena we encounter in experience, we must realize that there are significant differences between the conscious and unconscious to warrant the split in the first place. It is for this reason that one should be careful of the term "depth psychology", which so often gets applied to Freudian psychoanalysis, since it would be the same as assuming that the noumenal object has spatial dimensions corresponding to its phenomenal object.

Therefore, Freud does acknowledge that it is the burden of the psychoanalyst to propose how we should think of this unconscious part of the mind. The topographical model that Freud establishes in “Das Unbewußte” divides the mind into the conscious (*Bw*), preconscious (*Vbw*), and unconscious (*Ubw*). The *Vbw* is the part that contains what is not currently within the *Bw*, but can possibly move into it. Thus, latent memories, desires and thoughts that are not in view are examples of what can be within the *Vbw* system. Such content must be structured in such a way that they can be possibly represented within consciousness, and we can therefore understand much of this system through the structures we see that make consciousnesses possible (*GW X*, 271-2). However, the *Ubw* contains mental content that cannot be brought into consciousness. Some of this content is not allowed into consciousness because it has been repressed, which means that it had been formerly structured by the *Vbw* to enter the *Bw*. Other content is just not structured in the way that makes representation even possible within the *Bw*, specifically drives that have no ideas attached to them: “Ein Trieb kann nie Objekt des Bewußtseins werden, nur die Vorstellung, die ihn repräsentiert. Er kann aber auch im Unbewußten nicht anders als durch die Vorstellung repräsentiert sein” (*GW X*, 275-6). Although it is a conceptual challenge to study an “object” that has not even been conditioned to be seen by consciousness, Freud does argue that it is necessary to at least attempt some speculation given the empirical evidence provided within the view of consciousness.

One possible route of speculation, as Freud argues in this essay, is to remove the very conditions that make objects presentable to consciousness. In order to characterize the *Ubw* system in 1915, Freud establishes four major characteristics: absence of

contradiction (*Widerspruchlosigkeit*), the primary process (*Primärvorgang*), timelessness (*Zeitlosigkeit*), and the substitution of external reality by psychic reality (*ersetzung der äußeren Realität durch die psychische*) (GW X, 286). First, the logical framework that allows negation, contradiction, scepticism or disbelief (*Zweifel*), and certainty within the *Bw* is completely absent within the *Ubw*. These structures, rather, come through the censorship of the *Vbw*. The reason is that the only role that the *Ubw* system has is to be the source of drives:

Der Kern des *Ubw* besteht aus Triebrepräsenzen, die ihre Besetzung abführen wollen, also aus Wunschregungen. Diese Triebregerungen sind einander koordiniert, bestehen unbeeinflusst nebeneinander, widersprechen einander nicht. Wenn zwei Wunschregungen gleichzeitig aktiviert werden, deren Ziele uns unvereinbar erscheinen müssen, so ziehen sich die beiden Regungen nicht etwa voneinander ab oder heben einander auf, sondern sie treten zu Bildung eines mittleren Zieles, eines Kompromisses zusammen. (GW X, 285)

The fact that these drives exist together without the demand for logical consistency or hierarchy through consciousness means that we can only discuss them in the degree by which they are cathected (*besetzen*), i.e. given allocation or engaged with. Nothing is rejected or frustrated, but rather finds some way of working with what seems as opposites from an analytic understanding. Although we may run into logical conflicts within the *Vbw* and the *Bw* systems, such tensions do not arise internally within the *Ubw* in this 1915 topographic model. This leads us to the second major characteristic of the *Ubw* system. In terms of navigating these drives, the *Ubw* only has the primary process

(*Primärvorganges*) that focuses on immediate satisfaction of desire, thus only having the means of displacement and condensation that we see carried out in dreams. This is opposed to the secondary process (*Sekundärvorgang*) that operates in the *Vbw* and *Bw* systems, which sets aside the immediate satisfaction of pleasure through delay or negation in order to engage in reality-testing.

The other two major characteristics of the unconscious that emerge in 1915 is the lack of time and external reality. Just as Kant argues that time is transcendently ideal and empirically real because no object can be represented to consciousness outside of time, Freud argues that the unconscious is also devoid of the temporal structures necessary for the *Bw* system: “Die Vorgänge des Systems *Ubw* sind zeitlos, d.h. sie sind nicht zeitlich geordnet, werden durch die verlaufend Zeit nicht abgeändert, haben überhaupt keine Beziehung zur Zeit. Auch die Zeitbeziehung ist an die Arbeit des *Bw*-Systems geknüpft” (*GW X*, 286). It is a mistake to think that the processes exist outside of time because time is merely a necessary condition for consciousness to represent content to itself. This also entails the fourth characteristic, which the processes of the *Ubw* are not related to the reality principle, but rather only the pleasure principle. This should be no surprise, since Freud has already asserted that logical contradiction and secondary process do not apply to the *Ubw*. Thus, the *Ubw* doesn't have the means to interact with reality, so much so that the only acts it would be able to bring about within the organism are mere reflexes, since purposive muscular acts require conscious representation (*GW X*, 286-7). This model of the unconscious in 1915 is a very distinctive point in Freud's work, which we see clear reasons for why an unconscious is

necessary for his work and the conceptual limitations that are imposed by the very structures of consciousness.

Another important component of conceptualizing the unconscious in Freud's work by 1915 is the concept of repression (*Verdrängung*), which is a method to deal with the pain experienced within consciousness when it cannot satisfy the pleasure principle of the primary process. This component represents content that could possibly surface into the *Bw* system, but is actively pushed back by the secondary process within either the *Vbw* or *Bw*. The reason why repression is an important component in understanding the unconscious is that it is one of the few times where consciousnesses can become indirectly aware of the mental life that remains hidden from it.<sup>75</sup> Repression becomes an option to the mind because it has to deal with pain that it cannot escape by other means. Usually when one comes across an external stimulus that is unpleasant, one has the option to flee this external stimulus. However, if the feeling of aversion or pain is due to internal impulses, flight is not an option. Freud points out that the power of judgment can then be used to reject the impulse, but repression is a means between flight and condemnation that allows for judgement to take place later (*GW X*, 248). Freud consequently becomes interested in how it is possible for pain to be felt internally in this way, since the entire purpose of the primary process is to promote pleasure and cease pain. Yet consciousness develops to such a complexity that even the satisfaction of

---

<sup>75</sup> Although Freud was not the first to discuss the unconscious, it is important to note that his concept of repression reveals in what ways his version of the unconscious is distinctive from what came before. Specifically, the idea of repression indicates that the unconscious is, in part at least, disruptive and antagonistic to consciousness, and thus the psyche requires active forces like repression to hold the psyche together. Before Freud, the unconscious did not actively unsettle the conscious mind in this manner nor be the source of anxieties, but rather was the passive functioning of mental life.

pleasure becomes painful, resulting in the need to repress particular drives in the first place. This signals to Freud the development of the mind where there is an internal conflict that can no longer be resolved in the pure experience of pleasure. Regardless of how the organism acts, pain will arise because it leads to internal conflict. Thus, even when the particular drive is satisfied, the configuration of the psyche is such that it still feels pain:

Dann werden wir belehrt, daß die Befriedigung des der Verdrängung unterliegenden Triebes wohl möglich und daß sie auch jedesmal an sich lustvoll wäre, aber sie wäre mit anderen Ansprüchen und Vorsätzen unvereinbar; sie würde also Lust an der einen, Unlust an anderer Stelle erzeugen. Zur Bedingung der Verdrängung ist dann geworden, daß das Unlustmotiv eine stärkere Macht gewinnt als die Befriedigungslust. (*GW X*, 249)

Although the unconscious seeks to satisfy its drives through the primary process, consciousness organizes itself with the priority to avoid pain rather than seek pleasure, thus setting up a tension within the psyche that consciousness is not able to fully grasp. At this point in 1915, Freud does not think this tension could be generated within the unconscious alone, but rather the interaction of the primary process (pleasure principle) and the secondary process (reality principle), thus consciousness is already a necessary condition for repression to occur. It is a means of consciousness turning on its foundation and to exert some control over the drives that it emerged from, since the organism feels dissatisfaction if it violates either process (*GW X*, 250). Yet content that has been repressed must have the capability of entering into consciousness in the first place, i.e. it

is attached to an idea, even if it is censored at the level of the preconscious. Yet the cathexis of the drive cannot be negated within the unconscious, and thus it remains as a constant pressure:

... die Verdrängung erfordert einen anhaltenden Kraftaufwand, mit dessen Unterlassung ihr Erfolg in Frage gestellt wäre, so daß ein neuerlicher Verdrängte einen kontinuierlichen. Wir dürfen uns vorstellen, daß das Verdrängte einen kontinuierlichen Druck in der Richtung zum Bewußten hin ausübt, dem durch unausgesetzten Gegendruck das Gleichgewicht gehalten werden muß. Die Erhaltung einer Verdrängung setzt also eine beständige Kraftausgabe voraus und ihre Aufhebung bedueted ökonomiisch eine Ersparung. (GW X, 253-4)

This means that the repression of mental content will always remain indeterminate, since it can always potentially surface if the cathexis of the drive overpowers the effort put into the repression. Repression does not have the capacity of making a final decision. When repression begins to fail, and the representation of the drive threatens to surface, Freud notes that consciousness experiences anxiety of this potential. Thus, this dynamic of repression does have the effect of signalling to consciousness the mental life outside of itself, since it is coming into tension with what it can't see. Yet this treatment of repression in 1915 still leaves open questions concerning why we arrive at the internal tensions that lead to this process in the first place, a question that is reopened by Freud in 1920.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> As Peter Fonagy and Mary Target point out in *Psychoanalytic Theories: Perspectives from Developmental Psychopathology*, additional questions that arose for Freud at this point were: "where do we find a non-sexual drive instinct capable of repressing the

With *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* of 1920 and *Das Ich und Das Es* of 1923, we see a dramatic change in how Freud conceives of the unconscious, which I argue stems from his recognition that the model of the psyche must account for being embodied within the organism itself. It is important to note that the topography of the *Bw*, *Vbw* and *Ubw* in “Das Unbewußte” is merely a functional model of the mind, and has no mapping upon the anatomy of the organism.<sup>77</sup> In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* and *Das Ich und Das Es*, we see that he doesn’t treat the unconscious as a noumenal concept that is completely removed from the phenomenal, but rather something that is located in physical reality through biology. This becomes explicit when he cites G.T. Fechner’s *Einige Ideen zur Schöpfungs- und Entwicklungsgeschichte der Organismen* through a longer quote concerning the dynamic of pleasure and unpleasure of the organism as he opens up *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*:

„Insofern bewußte Antriebe immer mit Lust oder Unlust in Beziehung stehen, kann auch Lust oder Unlust mit Stabilitäts- und Instabilitätsverhältnissen in psychophysischer Beziehung gedacht werden, und es läßt sich hierauf die anderwärts von mir näher zu entwickelnde Hypothesen begründen, daß jede die Schwelle des Bewußtseins übersteigende psychophysische Bewegung nach Maßgabe mit Lust behaftet sei, als sie sich der vollen Stabilität über eine gewisse

---

sexual one, why do people feel guilt, and how does consciousness control impulses it is not yet aware of?” (41). Thus, it is clear that his essays in 1915 already had within them the motives for his major theoretical shift in 1920.

<sup>77</sup> He makes this clear when he states: “Unsere psychische Topik hat vorläufig nichts mit der Anatomie zu tun; sie bezieht sich auf Regionen des seelischen Apparats, wo immer sie im Körper gelegen sein mögen, und nicht auf anatomische Örtlichkeiten” (GW X, 273).

Grenze hinaus nähert, mit Unlust nach Maßgabe, als sie über eine gewisse Grenze davon abweicht, indes zwischen beiden, als qualitative Schwelle der Lust und Unlust zu bezeichnenden Grenzen eine gewisse Breite ästhetischer Indifferenz besteht...” (GW XIII, 4-5).

As was noted earlier, G.T. Fechner was one of the influences upon Freud that emphasized that the unconscious was a psychic entity, but he was also the founder of psychophysics with his 1860 work *Elemente der Psychophysik*. Fechner argued that although the mental and the bodily were not conceptually reducible to each other, they were still different aspects of one substance. Thus, in the given passage, when Fechner discusses the experience of pleasure and unpleasure within the organism, it is assuming a correspondence of stability and instability within the embodied system of the organism. Therefore, Freud is unable to avoid at this point, which is signalled in opening up this book with this passage, conceiving of the unconscious as something abstracted from the physical, something that was temporarily done to make theorizing the unconscious easier. Instead, we must recognize the unconscious as an embodied part of the organism that is not only responding to the physical world, but also a product within the physical world. As such, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* engages in much speculation about the possibility of biological foundations for his theories (especially in sections IV through VI), even though he ends the work noting how much research is needed still to ground these theories into an exact anatomical model.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> For an in-depth background concerning the importance of biology to Freud’s work in his development of psychoanalysis, see Frank J. Sulloway’s *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (1979) and Lucille B. Ritvo’s *Darwin’s Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences* (1990). Also, in terms of this particular transition of

Given this focus of the biological organism, Freud highlights the relationship between consciousness and the experience of pain that revisits aspects of his earlier writings with some important revisions. We see at this point that the self-awareness that is constitutive of our consciousness signals internal tensions that cannot be explained if our mental operations are dominated only by the pleasure principle. In *Das Ich und Das Es*, Freud echoes Nietzsche concerning the importance of pain in its role in awakening the organism: “Die Empfindungen mit Lustcharakter haben nichts Drängendes an sich, dagegen im höchsten Grade Unlustempfindungen. Dieses drängen auf Veränderung, auf Abfuhr und darum deuten wir die Unlust auf eine Erhöhung, die Lust auf eine Erniedrigung der Energiebesetzung” (GW XIII, 249). As Nietzsche pointed out that pain made the organism investigate its cause while pleasure placates such inquiries, Freud also is interested in how pain gives rise to the conscious mental process. One aspect of pain that returns in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* is the reality principle, where the resistance of reality frustrates the primary process and puts the self-preservation of the organism at risk. Thus, as we discussed with the process of repression, the secondary process develops as a tension with the primary process on these issues where the reality principle takes priority to preserve the organism in its environment (GW XIII, 6). However, Freud is quick to note that this does not cover the majority of unpleasant experiences of the psyche. A second source of pain recognized by Freud is the internal tensions generated by conflicts within the unconscious: “Unterwegs geschieht es immer wieder, daß einzelne Triebe oder Triebanteile sich in ihren Zielen oder Ansprüchen als unverträglich mit den übrigen erweisen, die sich zu der umfassenden Einheit des Ichs zusammenschließen

---

Freud’s biologization of the drives from 1915 to 1920, see pages 177-83 of Adrian Johnston’s *Time Drive: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*.

können” (*GW XIII*, 6-7). Here we see a bit of revision concerning the unconscious, which Freud acknowledges that there is the possibility of conflict amongst unconscious drives once we consider that the organism must attempt to bring them into a unity. This makes it easier for Freud to thus explain “neurotic pain” that arose when he first discussed the issue of repression in 1915, which we can see before the development of the secondary process why such tensions arise in the organism.

Although Freud is ultimately interested in finding a process operating separately from the pleasure principle, it is important to explain how these two causes of pain lead to the particular relationship of the Ego and the Id that alters Freud’s previous topography. Instead of focusing on the divisions of the *Bw*, *Vbw*, and *Ubw* structures, Freud begins to elaborate a structural model that establishes a division of the psyche into the Id (*das Es*), Ego (*das Ich*), and Super-Ego (*das Über-Ich*). Freud begins to see that his previous topography begins to fall into problems if we identify the Ego solely with consciousness, and instead begins to conceptualize the Ego as a coherent structure<sup>79</sup> that spans across the *Bw*, *Vbw* and *Ubw* systems. In fact, he notes in *Jenseits von Lustprinzip*s that a very small portion of the Ego can be described as conscious and pre-conscious, while much of it remains unconscious (*GW XIII*, 18). In *Das Ich und das Es*, Freud emphasizes that we should not think of the Ego as distinct from the Id, but rather is a modified outgrowth of the Id:

Es ist leicht einzusehen, das Ich ist der durch den direkten Einfluß der

Außenwelt unter Vermittlung von *W-Bw* veränderte Teil des Es,

---

<sup>79</sup> In section III, Freud uses the phrase “zusammenhängende Ich” (*GW XIII*, 18), which *zusammenhängend* can be translated as the “coherent” or “cohesive”. However, it should be emphasized that this is always a tenuous coherency or cohesiveness, since the Ego is also always in flux.

gewissermaßen eine Fortsetzung der Oberflächendifferenzierung. Es bemüht sich auch, den Einfluß der Außenwelt auf das Es und seine Absichten zur Geltung zu bringen, ist bestrebt, das Realitätsprinzip an die Stelle des Lustprinzips zu setzen, welches im Es uneingeschränkt regiert. Die Wahrnehmung spielt für das Ich die Rolle, welche im Es dem Trieb zufällt. Das Ich repräsentiert, was man Vernunft und Besonnenheit nennen kann, im Gegensatz zum Es, welches die Leidenschaften enthält. (GW XIII, 252-3)

As was stated earlier, the Ego develops the secondary process to negotiate the drives of the Id within the external environment, and therefore does not find itself necessarily opposed to the goals of the primary process. Freud notes that only repressed aspects of the Id are sharply distinguished from the Ego, a process that is both actively and unconsciously carried out when certain drives either become conflicting with the organic unity of the drives or with reality itself (GW XIII, 18-9, 252). The Ego also forms through the *W-Bw* system (*Wahrnehmungs-Bewußtsein*, or “Perception-Consciousness”), becoming aware through external and internal sensations of the organism’s body and environment. Freud stresses that the Ego is corporeal and tied to the very perceptions that allow it to differentiate from the original configuration of the Id, thus avoiding the idea that the Ego is some ghostly soul that can transcend the world (GW XIII, 253). He does note, however, that consciousness tends towards abstraction rather than remaining enmeshed in these sensory perceptions, where thinking in words is farther up in conscious thinking compared to thinking in pictures (GW XIII, 248). Yet this degree of

abstraction within consciousness is merely an indication of the level that information has been processed, not a distinct separation of the Ego from the body or the Id.

The maintained connection between the Ego and the Id has significant implications in how Freud revises his ideas of the subconscious in regards to temporality and the unconscious structures. As Paul Bishop points out in “The Unconscious from the Storm and Stress to Weimar Classicism: The Dialectic of Time and Pleasure”, Freud’s 1915 essay “Vergänglichkeit” demonstrates that he was becoming aware that his earlier theories of pleasure were problematic (Bishop 40-3). In this short essay recounting his conversation with a famous poet (most scholars believe this was Rainer Maria Rilke), Freud acknowledges the puzzling tension that exists when we find beauty in a world that is in constant flux. He even asserts, against the sorrows of the poet, that it is the very quality of transience that explains why we value such things in the world to begin with (GW X, 359). As Bishop notes, this runs up against his previous thoughts about the pleasure principle and the unconscious, which Freud begins to acknowledge that the drive’s interaction with time does have a significant impact in how we experience pleasure. Thus, thinking of the drives and the pleasure principle as completely unaffected by the temporality of the Ego either a) leaves inexplicable why the organism pursues a drive in time or b) fails to capture the very way that desire and pleasure are constituted. By the time of *Das Ich und das Es*, Freud acknowledges that the experiences of the Ego can be translated back into the Id if it can make a significant impression, thus indicating that although the Id may not be held to the structure of temporality, the experiences of temporality can be translated back to the drives and can then be passed down to future organisms: “Somit beherbergt das erbliche Es in sich die Rest ungezählt vieler Ich-

Existenzen, und wenn das Ich sein Über-Ich aus dem Es schöpft, bringt es vielleicht nur ältere Ichgestaltungen wieder zum Vorschein, schafft ihnen eine Auferstehung” (GW XIII, 267). This mutability of the unconscious indicates that the Ego interacts much more than just filtering and/or repressing the drives of the Id. Rather, the Ego does have, with experiences of significant impact and repeatability, an impact in reshaping the Id. This change in thought coincides with Freud’s realization that the Id represents much more than an organism driven by the pleasure principle, but rather is a structure that is at once in tension with itself and can express aggression towards itself through this auto-plastic process.

Since the Ego is not separated off from the Id, it feels the anxiety of these internal tensions, which becomes an important focus of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. It is also a point where I think Freud is revising his understanding of play in order to address these internal tensions of the unconscious parts of the psyche. While noting more aggressive tendencies of the unconscious that are not addressed by the pleasure principle that may be the underlying cause of traumatic neuroses, Freud begins with Part II his famous discussion of the “Fort-Da” game. Freud even notes this sudden shift to the play of children, acknowledging that some may find it odd to put trauma and play together: “Ich mache nun den Vorschlag, das dunkle und düstere Thema der traumatischen Neurose zu verlassen und die Arbeitsweise des seelischen Apparates an einer seiner frühzeitigsten normalen Betätigungen zu studieren. Ich meine das Kinderspiel” (GW XIII, 11). It is here where Freud describes an earlier event that involved the “Fort-Da” game invented by his grandson, which consisted of the throwing of small toys from the bed, thus vanishing from his sight and making an “o-o-o-o” sound. Freud interprets this sound to

mean in German “fort” (“gone” or “away”), thus pointing out the disappearance of the toys. Yet in one instance, when the game involved a reel where the child could pull the toy back by means of a string, he yelled excitedly “Da!”, meaning “There!” as the toy reappeared. Freud uses this case to discuss play as a means of dealing with anxiety, a means of coping with feeling a lack of control over one’s environment. The child, finding the disappearance of his mother traumatic, used the repetition of the game as a physical response to express his anxieties. The game allowed the child to move from a passive state of being abandoned, something he had no control over, to an active part in making the objects disappear repeatedly, allowing some mastery of the unpleasant experience. However, once he discovered that he could make the reel reappear by use of the string, this was an additional amount of mastery that was unexpected. Thus, the game allowed the child to overcome the anxiety of being abandoned by the mother, which Freud emphasizes for play generally that: “die Kinder alles im Spiele wiederholen, was ihnen im Leben großen Eindruck gemacht hat, daß sie dabei die Stärke des Eindruckes abreagieren und sich sozusagen zu Herren der Situation machen” (GW XIII, 14-5). Such a method allows them to place the impression in a manageable place in their understanding rather than keeping it in a vague state of the unconscious, thus making it easier to overcome.

One important reason Freud turns to play at this point in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* is that play demonstrates an instance where the psyche operates upon something other than just the pleasure principle, revealing that the developing Ego is more than fulfilling the primary process. The fact children can engage in the repetition of an anxiety-filled, frustrating and/or risky activity over and over again signals to Freud that the psyche

usually operates with aggressive tendencies, thus willing to put itself through unnecessary displeasure for the achievement aimed at by the play. He relates this process to trauma neuroses and transference neurosis, which are other instances of repetition that are not easily accountable through the pleasure principle. Yet Freud's turn to play within the child indicates that repetition is a "normal" operation of the psyche, and reinforces in this process that play is an important part of our development.

Yet some have become troubled with Freud's characterization of play, specifically with his focus on "mastery" (*Bemächtigung*). As Freud describes it in *Jenseits des Prinzips*, play is a process of transformation for the child: "Es war dabei passiv, wurde vom Erlebnis betroffen und bringt sich nun in eine aktive Rolle, indem es dasselbe, trotzdem es unlustvoll war, als Spiel wiederholt" (GW XIII, 13). Thus, play expresses an aggressive tendency to assert the Ego, but in so doing must return to previous anxieties and frustrations that were encountered. Freud expands on this, and notes that the play behaviour doesn't stay confined to the individual, but rather is then brought into a circle of playmates to disseminate the painful tensions that were experienced. As such, Freud reminds us of artists and actors who bring before an audience painful experiences that is mediated through their work, and the fact that we find pleasure in things like tragedy and sublime art indicates that we find pleasure in overcoming these painful experiences rather than merely avoiding them (GW XIII, 14-5). Thus, Freud emphasizes later that repetition, whether it be through play or neurosis, is a means to retroactively address past failures and anxieties by bringing it back into consideration once the Ego is in a place to handle the situation (GW XIII, 32). However, in *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*, Jonathan Lear objects to Freud's focus

on mastery and control, saying that Freud ignores other important aspects that play contributes in the Fort-Da game.<sup>80</sup> Lear emphasizes that it is not merely the repetition of the situation that allows the child to find the disappearance manageable. He reads Freud as emphasizing a teleological understanding of play in this particular case, taking the resulted satisfaction as the intent of the child when inventing the game. However, Lear argues that perhaps the disruptions that occur within the repetition itself also lends to the development of the game: “there is a more austere hypothesis that better fits the evidence: that the mind has a tendency to disrupt itself, that these disruptions are not *for* anything – they are devoid of purpose” (Lear 77). For Lear, the game provides a disruption, a meaningless void, that allows the teleological understanding that was held before, which in itself creates the anxiety or fear (i.e. “Mommy is gone forever”). It is not necessarily disputed that the game allowed the child to cope with his feeling of loss, but Lear argues that the nature of play itself did not determine the way the trauma was handled. It was rather the disruption introduced by play that allowed the child to move forward, and thus Freud mischaracterizes play because he emphasizes the repetition of action without highlighting the various results that occur with such repetition.

Although I agree with Lear that disruption is a significant quality in play, I do think he is unfair to Freud in his characterization. In particular, I think we need to focus on what Freud means by a drive towards mastery (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) in light of how he is extending play beyond a mere fulfilment of the pleasure principle. If we look earlier

---

<sup>80</sup> Other examples of authors who focus on Freud’s concept of play as power and mastery are the play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith and Legal Theorist Jeffrey Abramson. In *The Ambiguity of Play*, Sutton-Smith places Freud’s theory as a power theory of play, focusing on the ego’s mastery over obstacles (84-5). Abramson goes a similar route in his characterization in *Liberation and its Limits*, but does add that sublimation into more complex activities in culture is a significant step in this development of mastery (88-9).

on Freud's understanding of play, particularly spanning from 1905 to 1910 where we see specific discussions of play, we can see that he relegates it to a means of negotiation between the primary and secondary process. In *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (1905), we see for the first time a significant treatment on the issue of play, which he states is a precondition to the development of jokes and jest. Within this context of jokes, play is defined as something specifically seen in children as a constructive process while developing a grasp of language and thought. Play, however, is something carried out merely for pleasure without conscious intention, and is seen as meaningless from a rational perspective. It is characterized as merely being random babble and/or repetition, and doesn't make sense to those observing from the outside. At a certain point of development of the secondary process, the child begins to notice the meaninglessness or absurdity of this behaviour, and shifts over to jest. In jest, words are put together so that they have meaning, but they still preserve the pleasure that was observed in play. Yet what we express in jest is often something we can quickly dismiss as unimportant, even if this form of play has linguistic meaning. We only arrive at jokes when this meaning has actual importance or value in the situation given. Thus, jokes preserve within them the element of play while overcoming the inhibitions that are established through our secondary process: "Die zwei festen Punkte in der Bedingtheit des Witzes, seine Tendenz, das lustvolle Spiel durchzusetzen, und seine Bemühung, es vor der Kritik der Vernunft zu schützen, erklären ohne weiteres, warum der einzelne Witz, wenn er für die eine Ansicht unsinnig erscheint, für eine andere sinnvoll oder wenigstens zulässig erscheinen muß" (GW VI, 146-7). He adds shortly after this: "Wenn diese Aussage selbst eine gehalt- und wertvolle ist, wandelt sich der Scherz zum Witz"

(GW VI, 147). Therefore, we see that Freud's earlier thoughts about play places it as a precondition of more sophisticated development. Although its quality of pleasure seeking is preserved, Freud theorizes that the secondary process develops against it, assuming an antagonism, as well as theorizing it as something that is essentially meaningless for those coming from the outside of the behaviour.<sup>81</sup>

About three years later, we can observe some important shifts about the concept of play in "Der Dichter und das Phansieren" of 1908, particularly on this issue of meaning within the sphere of play. Instead of linking play to jokes, Freud discusses the connection between play and literature, seeing literature as a more developed way to preserve the dynamics of play against the secondary process. However, intermediary between play and literature is daydreaming, and comparing these three activities reveals a much more detailed concept of play for Freud:

Sollten wir die ersten Spuren dichterischer Betätigung nicht schon beim Kinde suchen? Die liebste und intensivste Beschäftigung des Kindes ist das Spiel. Vielleicht dürfen wir sagen: Jedes spielende Kind benimmt sich wie ein Dichter, indem es sich eine eigene Welt erschafft oder, richtiger gesagt, die Dinge seiner Welt eine neue, ihm gefällige Ordnung versetzt. Es wäre dann unrecht zu meinen, es nähme diese Welt nicht ernst; im Gegenteil, es nimmt sein Spiel sehr ernst, es verwendet große Affektbeträge darauf. Der Gegensatz zu Spiel ist nicht Ernst, sondern – Wirklichkeit. Das Kind unterscheidet seine Spielwelt sehr wohl, trotz

---

<sup>81</sup> For further discussion concerning Freud's study of humour (as well as the study of humour in psychoanalysis generally), see Alenka Zupancic's *The odd One In: On Comedy* (2008) and Simon Critchley's *On Humour* (2002).

aller Affektbesetzung, von der Wirklichkeit und lehnt seine imaginierten Objekte und Verhältnisse gerne an greifbare und sichtbare Dinge der wirklichen Welt an. Nichts anderes als diese Anlehnung unterscheidet das „Spielen“ des Kindes noch vom „Phantasieren“. (GW VII, 214).

Although the child deviates from reality when she plays, she is well aware and honest about the deviation within the play space. Thus, honesty about this deviation becomes an important characteristic in this work, since one remains aware of the boundaries of the activity. Yet we also see that the meaningfulness of the activity remains intact even if the child is aware of the limits of the play space, since she is still able to take it seriously. The child does not try to hide her play from others, and is aware that others may not be partaking in that play world in the way she is. As such, Freud conceptualizes play as an honest expression of one's fantasies and desires, since the child has not developed the inhibitions to expressing these matters to other people. In addition, Freud writes into his concept of play, as observed within the child, is really conditioned upon one desire: to become an adult. This teleological desire has an interesting implication in how his idea of play connects to reality, since the content of the play world is premised upon the child's understanding of the adult world. Although the child recognizes that she is playing and this playing is separate from reality, Freud acknowledges that she is still connected to reality due to this borrowed content. Day-dreaming (*Phansieren*) on the other hand does not maintain this honesty and seriousness. An important distinction arises where adults construct phantasies that they hide from others, often developing an inhibition to share because the daydream is somehow socially unacceptable or seems silly (GW VII, 215-6). As Ethel Person argues in *By Force of Fantasy*, our fantasies are often

much more intimate than dreams because we believe we have control over them, and therefore we are responsible for them (3, 57-8). Thus, although Freud was aware of phantasies being an important way to reveal one's character, he also saw the obstacle of getting the patient to share these daydreams with the analyst. This process of phantasy construction is a turning away from reality, and thus moves away from the direct connection that we see in the child's play world. At the same time, however, Freud does think that our phantasies do have a genetic link to our previous experiences, regardless how much they are distorted and abstracted, and can often be traced back to events that have left a significant impression upon the person. The dishonesty about one's phantasies can lead to neurosis, where one develops severe guilt and isolation when one feels ashamed of such desires and often attempts to devalue and dissociate from these desires (GW VII, 216). Although Freud argues that these tensions always exist within the psyche, it is with the neurotic where the schisms become openly expressed as reality and phantasy push each other apart, forcing consciousness to choose a side.

Therefore, the open expression of these fantasies becomes a necessary step in ending the neurosis, and the play element then returns in the discussion. Freud begins to contemplate the difference between art, specifically literature, and daydreaming, arguing that the artist is able to return to an open expression observed in child's play, but has also managed to circumvent the censorship that inhibits the daydreamer from bringing this phantastic content into reality. What emerges in Freud's discussion is that the artist brings together what is beneficial in both play and daydreaming (GW VII, 219-20). On the one hand, as was already pointed out, the artist develops the technique to convey various phantasies openly to society, and therefore preserves an important element of

play that we see in the child. On the other hand, Freud asserts that the artist and the daydreamer both exhibit more independence from reality than the child. As Freud discusses it in this essay, the child is much more enmeshed in reality when she plays, rearranging the order of objects without necessarily questioning the objects themselves. However, given that the daydreamer moves away from reality and into her own psychic realm, this separation allows for some independence to manipulate the objects taken from reality into psychical reality, even to the point of negating these objects (*GW VII, 222*). As Person notes, Freud gives a lot of consideration to phantasy and psychical reality as it has an impact on the life of an individual, since the way one perceives the world through phantasy has just as much an impact on how one acts compared to the real order of the situation (Person 54). Thus, although phantasy can lead to painful tensions like we see with the guilt-ridden daydreamer, phantasy can also have adaptive qualities by giving us some critical distance from a reality that we have motivation to change. What must be maintained is that there an honest assessment about the relationship one has with reality and phantasy. The artist is able to think about this relationship between reality and phantasy, as well as social reality, revising her work through techniques that make the phantasy content acceptable and believable for her audience. Unfortunately, as Freud ends this essay, this adaptive quality of art is overshadowed by his focus on the aesthetic pleasure that it invokes in the audience (*GW VII, 223*). Given this, it is easy to walk away with the impression that the only function of art and play is that they are this way to experience pleasure without guilt, and therefore is merely a release of the tensions that lie deep within our psyche.

However, Freud does return to this issue of the adaptive qualities two years later in “Formulierungen über die zwei Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens” of 1910.

While discussing how the psyche operates within the tension of the pleasure and reality principles, Freud focuses much more on how play, daydreaming and art function rather than the pleasure experienced as he discussed in “Der Dichter und das Phansieren”. Play and daydreaming are grouped together under “phantasizing” (*Phantasieren*), which are a mode of thinking that has split itself off from the reality testing of the secondary process. Thus, he characterizes both of these activities as breaking off their dependence on reality and its objects (*GW VIII*, 234). Art, on the other hand, is treated separately as an activity that brings the pleasure and reality principles together, but only made possible within a social context:

Die Kunst bringt auf einem eigentümlichen Weg eine Versöhnung der beiden Prinzipien zustande. Der Künstler ist ursprünglich ein Mensch, welcher sich von der Realität abwendet, weil er sich mit dem von ihr zunächst geforderten Verzicht auf Triebbefriedigung nicht befreunden kann, und seine erotischen und ehrgeizigen Wünsche im Phantasieleben gewähren läßt. Erfindet aber den Rückweg aus dieser Phantasiewelt zur Realität, indem er dank besonderer Begabungen seine Phantasien zu einer neuen Art von Wirklichkeiten gestaltet, die von den Menschen als wertvolle Abbilder der Realität zur Geltung zugelassen werden. Er wird so auf eine gewisse Weise wirklich der Held, König, Schöpfer, Liebling, der er werden wollte, ohne den gewaltigen Umweg über die wirkliche Veränderung der Außenwelt einzuschlagen. Er kann dies aber nur darum

erreichen, weil die anderen Menschen die nämliche Unzufriedenheit mit dem real erforderlichen Verzicht verspüren wie er selbst, weil diese bei der Ersetzung des Lustprinzips durch das Realitätprinzip resultierende Unzufriedenheit selbst ein Stück der Realität ist. (GW VIII, 236-7)

Although the artist is not altering the external world in favour of the pleasure principle in an aggressive manner that physically rearranges the order of things, Freud notes that the shared experience of the tension between the two principles creates a social space for art to be effective in bringing the two principles together in “harmony” for both the artist and her audience. Just as Nietzsche states concerning the important of “no-saying”, the turning away from reality becomes a necessary step to become critical of reality, expressing dissatisfaction and frustration that one’s phantasy and reality don’t align. Yet the artist develops the ability to return to reality with something of her own creation, which is in itself an adaptation for the pleasure principle while recognizing reality outside of the artwork. Although Freud seems to relegate play to merely an expression of the pleasure principle as separated out from the reality principle in 1908, we see in art the element of play that seems to move beyond phantasy and the pleasure principle to re-establish an honest relationship with reality. As was noted earlier, even though the child does engage in phantasy-making while at play, her desires are embedded in the reality she plays within, thus it really isn’t Freud’s concern that the child finds her way back to reality. However, given that we do see a different treatment of play in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, I think we can detect a shift in how Freud thinks of play as it is positioned not just between phantasy and reality, but also how it is positioned in regards to the different parts of the psyche.

I argue that the significant shift we see in Freud's concept of play in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* is that it becomes an integral part in how the Ego functions rather than a phase of Ego development. By 1920, Freud recognizes that the child's play does not express the teleological desire of becoming an adult, which itself is a difficult and problematic concept of the child to develop, but rather it is an open and honest expression of Ego formation. As was discussed earlier, Freud's sudden interest in repetition in child's play opens up problems for his earlier play concept, since the compulsion to repeat an unpleasant experience or obstacle defies the inherent logic of the pleasure principle. An easier route would be to circumvent the obstacle or resistance without returning to it.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the first important dynamic that Freud notes is that the child's play marks a shift from a passive state to an active one, where the repetition of a past experience that the child had no control becomes the focus of the play world: "Beim Kinderspiel glauben wir es zu begreifen, daß das Kind auch das unlustvolle Erlebnis darum wiederholt, weil es sich durch seine Aktivität eine weit gründlichere Bewältigung des starken Eindruckes erwirbt, als beim bloß passiven Erleben möglich war" (GW XIII, 36). By re-enacting the experience in a later stage of development, the child attempts to resolve the trauma of the experience at a point where she can actually respond to the external world and have some means to form predictions about her actions. As Peter Gay points out, this impulse finds itself opposed to what is referred to as the Eros drive, which is drawn to the world and to the newness of a situation. Instead, Gay describes this as a

---

<sup>82</sup> The psychoanalyst Melanie Klein points out in *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, one of the most underappreciated aspects of Freud's work is that he acknowledges the anxieties and traumas of childhood, moving him closer to Nietzsche's insight that we should be distrustful of our nostalgia for youth: "[a]long with the belief in the asexuality of the child has gone the belief in the 'Paradise of Childhood'" (Klein 3).

conservative and aggressive tendency of the unconscious drives, and is famously referred to as the death drive. This assertion in Freud's work has created some controversy for psychoanalysts concerning how one reconciles the normal observations of aggression in human beings and Freud's speculation of it as an inherent drive towards "death".

Although some psychoanalysts are open to the idea of the death drive, such as Melanie Klein and Jessica Benjamin, others have a hard time fully grasping how aggression is linked to a desire for death that is inherent in life (Gay 401-2). Those who have a hard time finding this connection have thus tried to separate these two, arguing that aggression and assertion of the Ego (i.e. ego-instincts) cannot be the same as organic life being driven towards inorganic matter (i.e. the death instinct).

However, I think this relationship between the Eros and death drives becomes clearer if we remember the dynamic that we saw earlier in Schelling's work.<sup>83</sup> Shortly after Freud talks about the child's use of play to transition from a passive state to an active state, he explains an important dynamic concerning this "death drive":

*Ein Trieb wäre also ein dem belebten Organischen innewohnender Drang zur Wiederherstellung eines früheren Zustandes, welchen dies Belebte unter dem Einflusse äußerer Störungskräfte aufgeben mußte, eine Art von organischer Elastizität, oder wenn man will, die Äußerung der Trägheit im organischen Leben. (GW XIII, 38)*

---

<sup>83</sup> Although one can draw parallels between Freud and Schelling, it should be noted that Freud did have an aversion to Schelling's philosophy due to what he perceived of as speculative excesses. In fact, much of Freud's insistence upon aligning psychoanalysis with positivism and scientific realism was due to the impact Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* had upon German medicine in the nineteenth-century (Tauber 24-40).

Freud characterizes this as an elastic quality of organic life, an internal organization that resists the changes that are inflicted upon it by outside conditions. The displacement causes within itself a desire to return to its past image or condition and is an inherent condition as the organism becomes something else. If we think back to Schelling, we see a similar tension develop within self-consciousness as it tries as subject to grasp itself as an object in the real. As self-consciousness moves from the infinite ideal to the finite real, it must withdraw itself into a momentary slice that is bounded by a limit, thus it has already an incomplete grasp of itself. Yet the Ego has no traction in reality without contracting itself into this limited form and asserting itself as an object that will be surpassed by a later instantiation. In Freud, we see a similar dynamic in that Eros is a drive that looks outward towards the infinite and the new, while the death drive looks inward that has a finite and limited concept of itself. Given that Freud thinks of this as an organic elasticity (*organischer Elastizität*), both the Eros and death drives are necessary to establish an equilibrium of the Ego. If the entity were driven only by Eros, it would disperse itself into infinity as it engages the world without inhibition. If it were driven only by the death drive, it would cut itself off from the outside influences and turn into a static point. Hence, we see with the death drive that the psyche is capable of collecting itself into an inner force that resists the outer forces, and through Eros it is able to engage with its environment and to be constantly in a state of displacement to prevent itself from becoming static. As consciousness arises, this death drive requires that it recognizes itself, but only through a representation that is located in the past. Yet, Freud argues in *Das Ich und das Es* that this idealization of the Ego, where one forms unconsciously an “ideal I” that the ego contrasts itself with, is the development of the Super Ego (*das*

*Über-Ich*). The Super Ego is a result of both biological and historical elements of childhood, when the child finds herself in a long period of helplessness and dependency. This unavoidable dependency leaves an indelible mark on how the Ego idealizes itself, both in terms of the resistance it encounters in its development, as well as the figures that it recognizes its dependence on (GW XIII, 263-5). However, we must be careful to not underestimate the complexity of this structure. As Peter Gay points out, there are a number of ambiguous identifications within the Super Ego, which the identification that one *ought* to be like the authority figure has already encoded in it the inability to fully realize this identification (Gay 415-6; Freud GW XIII, 262). It is this tension that makes it possible to distinguish the Super Ego from the Ego, as well as become an internally aggressive element that is continuously criticising the Ego at an unconscious level.

An important aspect that emerges about the Ego given these structures and their conflict is that the Ego is a structure that is inherently in tension rather than a given unity, and therefore requires an ability to continuously play with these forces that are differentiated within the psyche. In *Das Ich und das Es*, life itself is defined as the tension between Eros and the death instinct rather than a resolution of the tension: “Die Entstehung des Lebens wäre also die Ursache des Weiterlebens und gleichzeitig auch des Strebens nach dem Tode, das Leben selbst ein Kampf und Kompromiß zwischen diesen beiden Strebungen” (GW XIII, 269). In *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud had already expanded on this dynamic:

Das stimmt nun aber gut zur Annahme, daß der Lebensprozeß des Individuums aus inneren Gründen zur Abgleichung chemischer Spannungen, das heißt zum Tode führt, während die Vereinigung mit einer

individuell verschiedenen lebenden Substanz diese Spannungen vergrößert, sozusagen neue *Vitaldifferenzen* einführt, die dann abgelebt werden müssen. (GW XIII, 60)

Although the death drive is that part of the psyche that tries to bring itself into unity by ceasing the internal tensions, Eros is driven to increase these tensions and to increase the amount of life within the Ego through its attachments to the environment. Although Eros keeps the organism alive with its constant striving towards change, the death drive ensures that the Ego doesn't disperse due to a lack of boundary by resisting these additional complexities. It is for this reason that Freud thinks that the death drive and the aggression of the Ego are inherently connected.

Thus, the Ego emerges as this tension between these different sides, where the Id, Super Ego, the social world and physical words all come to points of contact and conflict. Although some interpreters of Freud assume that the Ego is a united structure that is located between these different aspects, I believe this is a problematic way of thinking about it. For example, in *Psychoanalytic Theories: Perspectives from Developmental Psychopathology*, Peter Fonagy and Mary Target put forward this idea that the Ego is this united structure that can be easily distinguished from the other structures and forces. This becomes apparent when they characterize Freud's theory of neurosis as the Ego being overwhelmed by the forces of the other structures in the equation, stating that the Ego's capability of *defending itself* is under threat (Fonagy and Target 46-7). Yet this characterization doesn't fit significant parts of how Freud describes the Ego. For example, he states in *Das Ich und das Es* that:

Es gleicht so im Verhältnis zum Es dem Reiter, der die überlegene Kraft des Pferdes zügeln soll, mit dem Unterschied, daß der Reiter dies mit eigenen Kräften versucht, das Ich mit geborgten. Dieses Gleichnis trägt ein Stück weiter. Wie dem Reiter, will er sich nicht vom Pferd trennen, oft nichts anderes übrig bleibt, als es dahin zu führen, wohin es gehen will, so pflegt auch das Ich den Willen des Es in Handlung umzusetzen, als ob es der eigene wäre. (GW XIII, 253)

Although Freud's analogy of the horseback rider is often cited, little attention is given to Freud's note that the Ego does not handle the situation using its own force. Instead, the forces used by the Ego to direct the Id are borrowed (*geborgten*) from the outside, and the Ego also borrows the Id's will for action. The Ego merely perceives the Id's will as its own after the action has been carried out. This passage creates problems for Fonagy and Target, since it is left unclear what is structurally there for the Ego to be distinct if the forces and will it uses are borrowed from the other structures. And if this is the case, it is also unclear what exactly the Ego is defending when it is trying to defend itself from these forces and will it is borrowing. If we dig deeply inside of this "I" of the Ego, we will find that it is empty of content as soon as we separate it off from the Id, external reality, and the Super Ego. As such, we cannot conceive of the Ego as a distinct entity.

Therefore, if we are to understand Freud's concept of the Ego, we must avoid reifying it as an independent entity that is capable of self-defense, but rather see it as the very play of forces. In Part V of *Das Ich und das Es*, titled "Die Abhängigkeiten des Ichs", Freud states while reviewing his earlier claims that the Ego is the result of the identification of the tensions and strivings of the Id, and over time it develops resistance

to this particular influence. The title of this section itself is often interpreted in English as focused on the dependencies of the Ego, but *abhängen* can also mean a leaving behind or uncoupling. Thus, while talking about how the Ego relates to the Id and Super Ego, he states:

... das Ich sich zum guten Teil aus Identifizierungen bildet, welche aufgelassene Besetzungen des Es ablösen, daß die ersten dieser Identifizierungen sich regelmäßig als besondere Instanz im Ich gebärden, sich als Über-Ich dem Ich entgegenstellen, während das erstarkte Ich sich späterhin gegen solche Identifizierungseinflüsse resistenter verhalten mag. Das Über-Ich verdankt seine besondere Stellung im Ich oder zum Ich einem Moment, das von zwei Seiten her eingeschätzt werden soll, erstens daß es die erste Identifizierung ist, die vorfiel, solange das Ich noch schwach war, und zweitens, daß es der Erbe des Ödipuskomplexes ist also die großartigsten Objekte ins Ich einführte. (GW XIII, 277)

While going through this discussion of how the Ego develops over time, he is bringing out the nuanced play that is inherent in this process of identification here. In saying, “This is me”, and therefore yielding an objective “I”, there is also the implicit process of rejecting what is not taken in as, “This is not me”. In the earlier stages of the Ego’s development, it is merely finding itself in the passive state of feeling the resistance of reality against the drives of the Id. Yet these identifications do not go away, and they remain in the background even if the present Ego is unaware of them. At any given time, it can return to an earlier identification, or generate new identifications as these earlier identifications come into tension with the later identifications. Therefore, the Ego exists

as a plurality of identifications rather than being a solid structure, albeit Freud notes that over time the Ego can lose its flexibility to play with these ways of thinking of itself.

When we return to the question of what Freud means that play is aimed at “mastery” (*Bemächtigung*), I think we should be interpreting mastery as this process of identification with the play of forces rather than a process of domination or control over the obstacles encountered in reality. Lear’s objection is understandable given how *Bemächtigung* is translated in English, which the connotations of the word “mastery” along with the context of trauma would make us think of an aggressive instinct to dominate over the situation. *Bemächtigen* can in some contexts mean bringing something under your control by force, and therefore this translation could be argued for. Yet, *bemächtigen*, a reflexive verb, can also mean to usurp or to hold onto something. Given Freud’s discussion of identification of the Ego with the cathexis of the Id and the latent structures of the Super Ego, it seems like mastery should be interpreted as this process of usurping something, taking the place of what it identified as other just before.<sup>84</sup> This is much like how a child, when at play, takes the persona of a fictional character, which is a temporary exploration that will be changed at a future point. When at play, the child both takes the persona seriously and also has the awareness of this identification in such a way that she can move away from it as well. Thus, when Freud states that play is part of the

---

<sup>84</sup> In *The Freudian Subject*, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen puts forward a radical version of this view, reading Freud through Lacan. In this view, the “I” in Freud is radically mimetic, and doesn’t exist prior to this process of identification (21-3). Although Borch-Jacobsen’s reading is quite compelling for various reasons, I would like to emphasize the biological component of the Ego that Freud emphasizes in his work, which Borch-Jacobsen neglects in order to highlight the social components of the Ego’s identification. However, this move away from the biological component in Borch-Jacobsen’s work is itself something that Lacan does not do, which Adrian Johnston indicates in “Reflections of a Rotten Nature: Hegel, Lacan, and Material Negativity”.

Ego's development of mastery in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, I read him as saying that the child is mastering the ability to incorporate the tensions it encounters from the resistance of the outer world and the constant ambiguity of the inner world. If the Ego is unable to identify with these tensions, then it would need to retreat from the trauma through neurosis or psychosis.<sup>85</sup> As a result, play becomes an integral part of the ego, since it must be able to play to continue its adaptation to new situations in the world and new instances of self-awareness.

Since play yields this sense of mastery of the Ego, allowing one to shift in one's identifications with more flexibility and honesty, then psychoanalysis itself becomes a more developed form of play. As Freud pointed out in his earlier treatments of play, the behaviour of the child doesn't go away, but rather it transforms and increases in complexity. Thus jokes and poetry both were instances of advanced forms of play that learned to incorporate the rational faculties that are critical of the earlier form. Given that play is concerned with the development and adaptation of the Ego to avoid neurosis and psychosis, psychoanalysis must also be rooted in play behaviour. For some psychoanalysts, this has already been made explicit by D.W. Winnicott in *Playing and Reality*, which he openly states: "psychoanalysis has been developed as a highly specialized form of playing in the service of communication with oneself and others"

---

<sup>85</sup> As Ruth Leys discusses in *Trauma: A Genealogy*, psychical trauma is a complex and difficult concept due to the fact that it is trying to represent something that defies the possibility of representation (16). However, Leys points out that within Freud's work, there is a heavy influence from the physiological model of defining trauma as a rupture of the skin (19). Although Leys shows the shifts and tensions of Freud's concept of psychical trauma throughout his work, this idea of rupture remains crucial, whether it is a feeling internally generated by the psyche or an external impact upon the organism. Whether we think this feeling of rupture or disunity is inherent to the Ego or comes after a scarring experience, I think that this is what Freud is picking out when he discusses the experience of psychical trauma.

(Winnicott 56). Yet this theory of psychoanalysis is not explicitly citing Freud's work when discussing play, but rather is built upon Winnicott's own theory of transitional space that is the liminal space between the inner and outer world. Freud, on the other hand, isn't as explicit as Winnicott in linking play with psychoanalysis, but his approach to psychoanalysis corresponds to the concepts of play in the previous chapters. In a note in *Das Ich und das Es*, Freud warns psychoanalysts of the temptation to think of oneself as having control over the patient due to her viewpoint from the outside. Given that the psychoanalyst has been carefully observing the patient's struggles objectively, she may think that she is justified in guiding the patient to do what she thinks is best, or may think that she has a privileged position to know what the patient will do ahead of time.

However, Freud makes a stark distinction in a footnote between physician and psychoanalyst in this regard, since it is not the job of the psychoanalyst to "cure" the patient: "... hier eine neue Schranke für die Wirkung der Analyse gegeben ist, die ja die krankhaften Reaktionen nicht unmöglich machen, sondern dem Ich des Kranken die *Freiheit* schaffen soll, sich so oder anders zu entscheiden" (GW XIII, n280). As a psychoanalyst, it is important to remind oneself that after psychoanalysis, it may be the case that the patient will still choose to express herself through the neurotic symptoms that she has developed during her neurosis. The goal is to make the patient aware of all the different forces that came together to form the neurosis in the first place, opening up other options even if the patient may decided to continue with her original decisions. It is not the job of the psychoanalyst to seek power over the patient in terms of guiding her down a normative prescription or to predict her path of development. The psychoanalytic session is itself a space of play that does not allow a transcendental or omniscient

viewpoint, since there is no pre-determined goal of modifying behaviour other than generating a self-awareness that was prevented when the patient refused to recognize other parts of herself. This is significant for interpreting Freud, since it is tempting to read Freud as a fatalist in that the Ego is merely a delayed recognition and retrospective rationalization of these unconscious forces. As Peter Gay points out, although Freud believes that we can deduce an action after the fact from the forces that contributed to it, it does not give us infallible predictive power over human action. We know this because Freud had a contemporary, Georg Groddeck, who theorized this relationship between the “I” and the “It”(Gay 408-10). Freud intentionally distinguishes himself from Groddeck in *Das Ich und das Es*, which he gives credit to Groddeck’s contributions in theorizing the “It” while noting that the passivity of the “I” in this formulation is problematic (*GW* XIII, 251). Although the Id does have a significant force upon the individual’s actions, Freud’s rejection of Groddeck’s theory<sup>86</sup> was rooted in that his concept of the Id required that the Id remained blind and divided in its multiplicity of drives. Groddeck assumed a unity that Freud was not willing to grant to this part of the unconscious.

Thus, the Ego still has an important function in the overall configuration of the psyche, even if he argues against the assumption of its dominance over the other components. Specifically, the Ego is what provides a semblance of unity and recognition of the drives that are incorporated into the psyche, which is not provided by the one-sided natures of the Id and Super Ego. To form a representation of the organism, choices have to be made as to what drives are identified with and what are excluded at a given time. Psychoanalysis, a process that makes us self-aware of this process of identification,

---

<sup>86</sup> Gay points out that Freud makes this playfully explicit when sending his birthday wishes to Groddeck by writing: “My Ego and my Id congratulate your It” (Gay 410).

makes the process more flexible for the Ego while not requiring unconscious repression. This element of play that constitutes the Ego as mediator of these forces also ensures for Freud that it is still an active power even if it does not generate its own force. And Freud is explicit that the Ego's ability to play is directly connected to the overall functioning of the psyche. If the Id or the Super Ego becomes dominant in the psyche, the organism as a whole suffers:

“Vom Standpunkt der Triebeeinschränkung, der Moralität, kann man sagen: Das Es ist ganz amoralisch, das Ich ist bemüht, moralisch zu sein, das Über-Ich kann hypermoralisch und dann so grausam werden wie nur das Es. Es ist merkwürdig, daß der Mensch, je mehr er seine Aggression nach außen einschränkt, desto strenger, also aggressiver in seinem Ichideal wird” (*GW XIII*, 284).

Although one may initially interpret the Super Ego as the “moral” component of the psyche, Freud defines the Super Ego as a “hyper-moral” element that is in the end just as destructive and aggressive as the Id. The Id, blind to the restrictions of physical and social reality, would push the organism by its own drives to the point of disintegration unless its force is focused into specific actions to overcome the resistances it encounters. Thus, much like Schiller's sensuous drive, the Id provides a raw force in the real without being able to direct itself. However, the Super Ego can be just as aggressive towards the Ego being an ideal, much like Schiller's formal drive. With its ideal of what reality should be, rather than what it is, the Super Ego can become overly aggressive towards the Ego for not being able to instantiate the phantasy, which is often paralyzing to the Ego in its attempt to act because the Super Ego can only negate the positive content of reality.

Therefore, the Ego is truly the moral component of the psyche because it is what mediates between the bodily Id and the phantastic Super Ego to shape real action in the direction of moral ideals. Yet moral action is the result between the Ego balancing between the Id and the Super Ego rather than a domination or reduction of one component over the others.

A year later, Freud emphasizes this dynamic in 1924 with two short essays: “Neurose und Psychose” and “Der Realitätverlust bei Neurose und Psychose”. In the first essay, he discusses the distinction between what constitutes an instance of neurosis versus an instance of psychosis, which both stem from the Ego’s struggle to mediate between the different forces surrounding it. Psychosis is characterized as the Ego’s over-commitment to the pleasure principle, thus estranging the relationship between the Ego and the external world. In this dynamic, the individual denies reality in favour of the drives of the Id. Neurosis, on the other hand, is when the Ego is over-committed to the reality principle, thus developing a strained relationship with the Id. However, even though the Ego has aligned itself with the reality principle, Freud notes that the Ego has become attached to past experiences of reality rather than reality itself in neurosis (*GW* XIII, 387-8). Thus, memory and the Super Ego, which is the Ego ideal that is formed from past experiences, is really what is interfering with the Ego’s ability to engage with reality in an open manner by irrationally repressing the drives of the Id. Thus, the inability to constantly mediate between these two principles leads to one of these two disharmonious states. We see in “Der Realitätverlust bei Neurose und Psychose” an echo of what we saw described as “healthy” behaviour in “Formulierungen über die zwei Prinzipien des psychischen Geschehens”:

Der anfängliche Unterschied kommt dann im Endergebnis in der Art zum Ausdruck, daß bei der Neurose ein Stück der Realität fluchtartig vermieden, bei der Psychose aber umgebaut wird.... Normal oder „gesund“ heißen wir ein Verhalten, welches bestimmte Züge beider Reaktionen vereinigt, die Realität so wenig verleugnet wie die Neurose, sich aber dann wie die Psychose um ihre Abänderung bemüht. Dies zweckmäßige, normale Verhalten führt natürlich zu einer äußeren Arbeitsleistung an der Außenwelt und begügt sich nicht wie bei der Psychose mit der Herstellung innerer Veränderungen; es ist nicht mehr autoplastisch, sondern alloplastisch. (*GW XIII*, 365-6)

For Freud, the general state that is desired is an oscillation between psychosis and neurosis, where the Ego doesn't make an ultimate determination between the reality principle (Super Ego and the external world) and the pleasure principle (the Id). Both elements contribute to the Ego's ability to remain connected to reality and to instantiate action in a space of constant difference. The neurotic attempts to modify her desires to accommodate reality, thus ensuring that the drives that are cathected can be achieved with the resistances encountered within physical and social reality. However, this autoplasic process leave the external world untouched, and the neurotic will often choose certainty through repetition rather than take the risk of new methods. The psychotic, on the other hand, in her denial of reality, is much more open to attempts to change external reality through spontaneous actions without much foresight of what may result. Thus, we see the similar oscillation as with Schelling, where the certainty of theoretical knowledge undermines the certainty of free will, and vice versa. The certainty of the neurotic's

grasp of “reality” leads to inaction, while the psychotic’s grasp of desire leads to blind, and often dangerous, action.

In understanding Freud’s concept of play as the drive towards self-mastery, we can also see how this concept fulfils the four conditions of play, as defined in the Introduction. First of all, by the point of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, the Ego recognizes a clear delineation of space and time that is the site of tension while it is in play, and is able to take the events inside this boundary seriously. Much like aesthetic semblance, the child is honest with herself about the space being established during play, and doesn’t impose its significance as a universal in infinite time and space. Second, Freud requires that there is an engagement with the environment while in play, which distinguishes it from phantasy and daydreaming. Although phantasy makes an important contribution to the process, play prompts a process of reality-testing that requires the child to express and adapt the phantasy to the conditions of the external world, thus putting the phantasy at risk for the sake of physical action. This leads to the third condition, which is that play requires that there be an uncertainty of the outcome. For Freud, play is crucial for the functioning of the psyche because no component, tactic or experience should dominate over the entire configuration, and thus any instantiation of a harmony does not present us with a final solution. The Ego must mediate between the different forces around it because it cannot generate its own force, and therefore is never in a state that can dominate over the Id or Super Ego. The Id is blind to reality, and therefore the individual would end up in psychosis if the Ego aligns with pleasure principle all the time. The Super Ego is overly aggressive towards the Ego’s inability to realize its phantasy generated from past experiences of reality, and thus the individual develops neuroses

when the Ego is always aligned with the reality principle. Thus, as Schiller noted, any establishment of a hierarchy by the Ego will lead to dysfunction when it is permanently in that state. This is why Freud thinks it is dangerous when the psychoanalyst is tempted to “cure” the patient of their symptoms, since the psychoanalyst presupposes a predetermined harmony that must be forced upon the patient. In a play space, there is neither a transcendental view nor dominant logic from which one can predict the result of the process. We can determine after the fact all the conditions that led to the result, but it is not a predetermined result. Therefore, in both the Fort-Da game and the psychoanalytic session, it is the realization of new options and awareness of forces that is important about play, and it should be up to the Ego to learn how to navigate these forces and options. In this sense, I think Jonathan Lear is correct that the disruption is an important part in the play space, but Freud also wants to emphasize that the disruption merely adds a new awareness that allows choice in the mediation of internal and external conditions.<sup>87</sup> Fourth, Freud asserts that play is motivated internally. Even though the Ego must adapt the Id’s drives (and later the Super Ego’s phantasies) to the external world, these impulses are still coming from within the overall psyche. Neuroses, in the attempt to repress the Id, prevent the individual from playing because they try to undercut

---

<sup>87</sup> I would also like to acknowledge that Lear raises a deeper objection to Freud’s discussion in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* that this rereading of “self-mastery” doesn’t address. Specifically, Lear points out that instead of inventing another principle to account for the breakdown of the pleasure principle, he failed to consider that this “other principle” should have been the lack of principle itself. Freud assumes that this apparent disorder is actually structured by another order, which ironically seems as though Freud is masking over the anxiety of the disruption of order itself (Lear 84-5). This is a legitimate objection against Freud, but given that I want to focus on Freud’s concept of play specifically rather than Lear’s, it will not be addressed here. For further discussion concerning this objection, see the conclusion of Adrian Johnston’s forthcoming book *A New German Idealism: Reflections on Žižek’s Dialectical Materialism*, particularly pages 323-33.

this internal motivation. Thus, even though the reality principle must be observed in the play space, the pleasure principle must also be observed because the honest expression of the desire allows the organism to identify with the world. If this is absent, then the most we are dealing with is work.

Therefore, if we are to understand that Freud valued play as a form mastery by the Ego, this mastery is specifically the achievement of decentering itself and renouncing any claims to omnipotence and omniscience. As Joel Whitebook states in his essay “Reflections on the Autonomous Individual and the Decentered Subject” that “the advocates of the decentered subject see [the autonomous individual] as a distorted mode of self-formation which reflects the atomistic, anthropocentric and imperialistic distortions of the very culture that produced it” (97). The major insight of psychoanalysis is that despite the appearance that consciousness is the center and master of the psyche, we must decenter consciousness and acknowledge the various forces that are out of its view in order to achieve maturity. In this recognition, according to Whitebook, consciousness must also give up its hopes for omnipotence. I would like to expand on Whitebook’s point. Underlying this recognition is the ability to play, since the Ego must maintain a space where it both recognizes its limits in power and the reach of meaning, but still learns to take its activity seriously within those acknowledged limits. Thus, the Ego must not only let go of the desire for omnipotence, which otherwise can lead to psychosis, but the Ego must also let go of the desire for omniscience that pushes towards neurosis. Instead of attempting to achieve certainty through a totality of either power or knowledge, the Ego must remain open to the uncertainties inherent in both its internal constitution and external condition, since the only final resolution that can be achieved

for the organism is when it ceases becoming and becomes inorganic, i.e. dead. Thus, the only mastery over life that can be achieved, as it emerges in Freud's work, is to maintain a space of play that works with both the divided psyche and its open-ended environment, acknowledging the admixture of phantasy and reality that is inherent in our conscious experience.

## CONCLUSION

### The Importance of Play for Embodied Consciousness

As Schiller begins *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, he makes it markedly clear that the horror of the Terror following in the wake of the French Revolution and the alienation of individuals in an increasingly mechanized social order are deeply connected results of an uncritical faith in reason that endured during the early Enlightenment. However, Schiller's response was not to reject reason, but rather to critique the mechanical Cartesian conception that separated reason from embodiment and nature. When Schiller discusses the dangers of rational egoism, he notes that reason becomes incredibly cruel and destructive when it is cut off from the world and resides in its infinite emptiness. Therefore, Schiller argues that reason was itself a product of nature, something that emerges slowly from the physical state and wakes up in a world that it does not identify with because it was not of its own choosing. Like an alienated adolescent who rebels against society indiscriminately, reason's first response is to wipe away the physical state in order to replace it with its own order. Yet Schiller suggests an alternative route: that reason should learn to work with the physical state in which it awakes instead of trying to annihilate it, and thus turn to the play of the aesthetic. Because Schiller argues that conscious reason emerges from nature but is also something separate from it, the play drive becomes an important component of bringing together the finite, momentary part of the self in harmony with its infinite, eternal part, thus achieving a state of becoming in the aesthetic realm. Thus, although Schiller recognizes the problematic nature of uniting the self as a result of unconscious nature and

conscious reason diverging from one another, he believes that a tenuous equilibrium could be achieved within aesthetic semblance.

When Schelling takes up Schiller's task of explaining how the conscious "Ich" emerges from unconscious Nature in his *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, he also turns to the play of aesthetic activity as an important component to explain how the ideal and the real can interact. Schelling emphasizes that the conscious activity within transcendental idealism is an outgrowth of the same rational activity within *Naturphilosophie*, and therefore the Ego is just Nature becoming aware of itself. This approach postulates a primordial harmony between Nature and Ego, which was a claim that Schelling had reservations about in his works surrounding the *STI*. Although Schelling adopts the play concept to explain how aesthetic activity brings these two aspects together, thus giving us a glimpse of the absolute, Schelling recognizes how tension is constitutive of consciousness and self-consciousness. Schiller deals with this point when discussing the unique experience humans have being between the finite and infinite, which is why he thought tragedy offered such an important experience for those discovering the force of the formal drive against the sensuous. Yet Schiller only takes this to be important so that we recognize each drive for its contribution before we bring them into an organic harmony through play. Schelling, on the other hand, asserts that the tension must never be resolved, otherwise it dissolves both the Ego's activity of theoretical understanding and practical action within the world. To keep this tension of its own activity, the Ego must engage its real environment through the aesthetic to create a product, but the product must remain partially indeterminate to consciousness in order to resist a permanent resolution. Without this indeterminacy, and thus preservation of the

tensions of the conscious and unconscious (as well as the tension of theoretical and practical philosophy), the product would be a mere artefact, thus dissolving the complexity of the conscious Ego encountering its own unconscious Nature. Although Schelling doesn't believe that a final harmony is possible within the aesthetic, he does think that the play within the aesthetic allows a productive and critically self-aware relationship between the Ego and Nature, allowing the Ego to see its constant state of becoming as important while placed in the context of its recognized limits. Thus, although Schelling thinks it is important that the Ego strives for unity as an ongoing aim, the self remains merely a semblance that must maintain its internal differentiation in order to keep its consciousness intact.

Nietzsche pushes this motif of the "Ich" as a site of tension even further and moves to ground consciousness physiologically through his discussion of pain. Taking up Schiller's thought that conscious reason emerged from its sensuous nature, Nietzsche insists that we think of the possibility that consciousness is, as a newly developed faculty, dangerously incomplete and imperfect. Pain becomes an important aspect of consciousness since it raises questions that draw the conscious "Ich", or ego, into the world to find its cause, as well as uses pain to inscribe memories within the organism. Surprisingly, given that Nietzsche describes consciousness as a faculty that recounts pain and errors, a genealogical account emerges where the ego necessarily looks to the outside world for its content. Consciousness becomes aware of what resists the unconscious rationality of the organism, thus the very thoughts we identify with are inextricably bound with the environment we are trying to overcome. Even language, as Nietzsche points out, is rooted in our social and biological dependency, a need to communicate our

needs and fears, and thus this tool that we attribute to rationality is part of what binds us to our social environment. This requires that the ego develop the ability to play with the relationships it has with its environment and community through an intricate navigation of “no-saying” and “yes-saying”. Through the figure of the child, Nietzsche argues that the affirmation that we see in child’s play is important to learn in order to escape nihilism, since play allows the ego to take its activity seriously while recognizing that this meaning is within its own sphere of consciousness and is open to modification as it encounters new obstacles. Also, while at play, the ego is also open to others finding their own order that is meaningful to them, and therefore no longer dependent on being affirmed by others. Although Nietzsche is often seen as an anti-moralist, this argument for play extends to his idea that morality is both anti-natural and arbitrarily chosen, but still has meaning for the individual specifically because it is self-affirmed rather than grounded in a “natural order” or social acceptance.

Finally, Freud takes up these developments of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries in order to develop a clinical account of the unconscious, and focuses again on the tensions generated within consciousness as it becomes aware of external and internal forces. Before 1920, Freud assumed a simpler model of the psyche that relied primarily on the pleasure principle. Consciousness served as an extension of this principle to navigate the obstacles of the environment and social reality. Play becomes an important component in this model due to its ability to bring content from the unconscious to the conscious while working with the censorship of the rational faculty, which is carried out through developed activities like literature and jokes. After 1920, with *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud complicates the model by making the psyche even more divided, and

the conscious Ego becomes explicitly the site of conflict between internal and external forces that are no longer premised solely on the pleasure principle. However, while undergoing this transition, Freud signals that play is still a significant component of the Ego, the structured “I”, and observes that play in itself isn’t always done for pleasure. Instead, the very repetition of play indicates that the developing Ego, as it biologically and socially matures, is learning to identify with the different forces that generate the conflict, and this flexibility allows new ways to temporarily resolve these tensions that are a constant cause of anxiety for the psyche. Thus, Freud later argues that the Ego, to remain functional, is constantly oscillating between neurosis (thus overly committed to the reality principle and Super Ego) and psychosis (thus overly committed to the pleasure principle and the Id). In this arrangement, the Ego should never become static, and thus must be continuously at play with these different parts of the psyche to provide the semblance of a unified self.

As we progress through the work of each figure, we see that the concept of “self”, a unity that consciousness tries to achieve as soon as it becomes internally differentiated, becomes more and more a semblance than an attainable object, but the role of play remains consistent throughout each of these models. Each figure stresses the importance of positing self-aware boundaries that are mutable within time and space, and of maintaining an honest awareness of these boundaries. Thus, even if one’s activity doesn’t have meaning outside of the boundaries of the play field, it still maintains its meaning within. All four stress the importance of engaging with the external environment, thus actively encountering resistance as one pushes through the constraints of reality to express one’s desire or will. Without this engagement, the desires remain

empty as the “Ich” retreats from the world into its own fantasy or myopia. In this engagement, uncertainty of the outcome becomes important because it allow new developments that consciousness is unable to anticipate, and this outcome can always be potentially revisited in light of later experiences. Finally, all four argue for the importance of the “Ich” identifying with the meaning of the finite activity, even if it recognizes possibility of dissatisfaction outside of the recognized boundaries. Thus, although Schiller thought that play as aesthetic semblance actually brought together a “self” in the harmony of beauty, Schelling, Nietzsche and Freud thought the aesthetic semblance provided at least enough to take the “self” seriously within the acknowledged boundaries while remaining open to the internal tensions and uncertainties of embodiment. In fact, it is the very play of aesthetic semblance that allows an increasingly complex consciousness, since it maintains the importance of the tensions taking place within the play space without dissolving them with a permanent resolution when moving forward. Play, therefore, is not longer thought by these four as an activity that is frivolous and out of the ordinary world, thus relegated to leisure and childhood, but instead is a state of consciousness that allows these tensions to exist in a meaningful manner.

Thus, Schelling, Nietzsche and Freud are comfortable with the idea that a unity is striven for but never achieved at the level of consciousness, since consciousness is able to recognize and give equal consideration to the forces of the external and internal worlds that are differentiated within the play space that brings them together. Instead of the mechanical conception of unity, the organic conception of unity became a central focus for Schiller and Schelling, taking up the work of people like Kant, Goethe and

Blumenbach (Gigante 22-6). Schelling is particularly important in this development through his *Naturphilosophie*, providing an objective ground for the subjectivity that is constantly dividing itself. Hegel termed this unity in Schelling's work the "identity of identity and non-identity" in his 1801 *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie* (156), a term adopted a year later by Schelling himself.

Although the conscious "Ich" will always see itself as subject opposed to its object, it is also understood that they are united within the absolute, an underlying condition that makes the internal differentiation into subject and object possible. This is particularly salient when we look at organic systems, in which the parts are defined and sustained by their interdependence when organized into a whole (rather than merely serving the purpose of the whole in a mechanical unity). Thus, Schelling demonstrates that despite the conscious lack of unity, consciousness could still perceive glimpses of an organic, flexible unity that prevents from the dispersal of the self.

One theme that has taken central stage in all four figures has been the existence of the unconscious, which by extension is rooted in concerns about our embodiment. As Whyte said in the quote with which I opened the introduction, the conscious "Ich" or ego wants to think that it is already mature and knows more than it really knows, and thus is in danger of becoming uncritical of its own limits. Although Cartesian dualism is credited for giving a sense of control over the world through mechanics by rendering matter inert, its separation of the "I" and the body also reinforced the idea that consciousness was at least completely aware and in control of itself. By claiming that consciousness emerges from unconscious matter, as well as taking content from its environment, this feeling of omniscience and omnipotence in regards to the self is

undermined by the existence of the unconscious. It remains as an uncertain element that challenges the totality that consciousness perceives of itself since it can always introduce new content that goes against this self-representation. However, play becomes an important component of consciousness because it introduces the flexibility to adapt to new situations and discoveries while maintaining a structure for this change to occur without dispersing or collapsing. In a state of play, one is able to integrate uncertainties without it undermining what is present to consciousness. However, the danger is that in its false maturity, consciousness can have a tendency to think it no longer needs to play, and thus becomes non-adaptive to its environment and growth of self.

One final point that emerges from all four philosophers is the need to recognize that there can never be a transcendental viewpoint in regards to the self or the world. This comes with the recognition of the unconscious and the play that is necessary to provide a semblance of self. As I demonstrate in my analyses, consciousness cannot achieve self-transparency of itself if it acknowledges that it must remain in a fluctuating relationship with the unconscious. However, this also has an impact on how consciousness represents the world and communities. If consciousness is still discovering itself in this relationship with the unconscious, how can it achieve a complete vantage point over the world and other conscious beings? As Schiller notes, the shift from an organic model of politics to the mechanical is ultimately disastrous, since the mechanical model is limited and unable to adapt to the growing dignity of the persons living under it. Schelling emphasizes that the products of aesthetic activity will always remain pregnant with new meanings, and that no one can ever achieve a viewpoint that captures an entire culture (especially those within the culture). Nietzsche embraces a

polytheistic outlook of the world in which we can acknowledge the different ways life can organize itself, as well as the way that new orders emerge when different organizations of life encounter each other. And finally Freud, coming from a clinical perspective, warns the psychoanalyst that despite their training and view of the patient from the outside, even they do not have a privileged viewpoint in regards to the psychoanalytic session. Thus, play becomes an important mode of engaging the world and other people, since the assumption that one certainly knows the world, either through utopian or nihilist representations, ultimately leads to violence if carried out inflexibly. Thus, without this transcendental position that can say for certain who is “right” and who is “wrong”, one must rely on dialogue, interpretation, and the play of these two in order to move forward in the world and society. It is for that reason play is something we must not dismiss as “not serious”, since it is an important state of consciousness that allows us to take our finite actions in the world seriously while with a sense of flexibility and critical self-awareness.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acosta López, Maria del Rosario. "‘Making Other People’s Feelings Our Own’: From the Aesthetic to the Political in Schiller’s *Aesthetic Letters*", in *Who is this Schiller Now? Essays on his Reception and Significance*, ed. Jeffrey L. High. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011, pp. 187-201.
- Abramson, Jeffrey. *Liberation and Its Limits: The Moral and Political Thought of Freud*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
- Ameriks, Karl. *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Babich, Babette E. "Nietzsche’s Artists’ Metaphysics and Fink’s Ontological World Play", *International Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 37, Is. 3 (2005): 163-181.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Words in Blood, Like Flowers: Philosophy and Poetry, Music and Eros in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger*. New York: State University New York Press, 2006.
- Behler, Ernst. *Philosophy of German Idealism; The German Library: Vol. 23*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Beiser, Friedrich. *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination*. New York: Clarendon Press, 2005.
- Bergmann, Martin S. "The Jewish and German Roots of Psychoanalysis and the Impact of the Holocaust", *Imago*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Fall 1995), 243-59.
- Bishop, Paul, "The Unconscious from the Storm and Stress to Weimar classicism: the dialectic of time and pleasure". *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 26-56.
- Borch-Jacobsen, Mikkel. *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988.
- Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Breihaupt, Fritz. "Goethe and the Ego", *Goethe Yearbook*, Volume XI, 2002, pp. 77-109.
- Burghardt, Gordon M. *The Genesis of Animal Play: Testing the Limits*. Cambridge, MA:

- MIT Press, 2005.
- Byrum, C. S. "The Concept of Child's Play in Nietzsche's of the Three Metamorphoses." *Kinesis: Graduate Journal in Philosophy* 6 (1974): 127-35.
- Caillois, Roger. *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Crtichley, Simon. *On Humour (Thinking in Action)*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Descartes, René. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Dewhurst, Kenneth and Nigel Reeve. *Friedrich Schiller: Medicine, Psychology, Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Emden, Christian J. *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- Ffytche, Matt. *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Fink, Eugen. *Nietzsches Philosophie*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006.
- Förster, Eckart. *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*, trans. Brady Bowman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Gesammelte Werke in 18 Bänden*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999.
- Gay, Peter. *Freud: A Life for our Time*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.
- Gigante, Denise. *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Gödde, Günter. "Freud and nineteenth-century philosophical sources of the unconscious", *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 261-86.
- Goudeli, Kyriaki. "The Potencies of Beauty: Schelling on the Question of Nature and Art", *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, Vol. 4, Issue 2 (2012), pp. 253-63.
- Hegel, G.W.F. *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*,

trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1988.

Heidegger, Martin. *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"*, Gesamtausgabe Band 39. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980.

Hoffheimer, Michael H. "The Influence of Schiller's Theory of Nature on Hegel's Philosophical Development", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1985), pp. 231-44.

Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Urtheil und Seyn*. Provided by Bibliotheca Augustana. Web. Accessed March 5, 2016.

Hogrebe, Wolfram. *Prädikation und Genesis: Metaphysik als Fundamentalheuristik im Ausgang von Schellings "Die Weltalter"*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989.

Huizinga, Johann. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955.

Johnston, Adrian. "A New German Idealism: Reflections on Žižek's Dialectical Materialism". Manuscript of forthcoming book. June 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Reflections of a Rotten Nature: Hegel, Lacan, and Material Negativity", *Filozofskivestnik*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (2012): 23-52.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005.

Kalar, Brent. "The Naive and the Natural: Schiller's Influence on Nietzsche's Early Aesthetics", *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 25:4 (October 2008): 359-377

Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Werkausgabe Band III/IV*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Kritik der Urteilskraft, Werkausgabe Band X*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik I, Werkausgabe Band XI*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Klein, Melanie. *The Writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. II: The Psychoanalysis of Children*,

- trans. Alix Strachey. New York: The Free Press, 1975.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Kosch, Michelle. *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling and Kierkegaard*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Krupp, Anthony, "Other Relations: the Pre-History of *le moi* and (*das*) *Ich* in Jean Jacques Rousseau, Karl Philipp Moritz, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte", in *Goethe Yearbook*, Vol. XI, 2002, pp. 111-131.
- Lambrellis, D.N. "Beyond the Moral Interpretation of the World: The World as Play: Nietzsche and Heraclitus", *Philosophical Inquiry*, vol. 27, Issue 1-2 (2005): 211-221.
- Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche's Teachings: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986.
- Lauer, Chris. "Reason at Play: The Place of Schellingian Childishness in the *Phenomenology's* Dialectic of Reason", *The Owl of Minerva: Quarterly Journal of Hegel Society of America*, Vol. 38, Issue 1-2 (2006-7), pp. 57-75.
- Lear, Jonathan. *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Leibschner, Martin. "Friedrich Nietzsche's Perspectives on the Unconscious", *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 241-260.
- Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Luchte, James. *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra: Before Sunrise*. New York: Continuum Press, 2008.
- Macor, Laura Anna. "Die Moralphilosophie des jungen Schiller. Ein Kantianer ante litterum", in *Who is this Schiller Now? Essays on his Reception and Significance*, ed. Jeffrey L. High. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011, pp. 99-115.
- Magee, Bryan. *The Great Philosophers: An Introduction to Western Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Marquard, Odo. *Tranzendentaler Idealismus, Romantische Naturphilosophie, Psychoanalyse*. Cologne: Jurgen Dinter, 1987.
- Marquet, Jean-François. *Liberté et existence: Etudes sur la formation de la philosophie*

- de Schelling*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006.
- McGrath, S.J. *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Miller, R.D. *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom: A Study of Schiller's Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant*. London: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Moore, Gregory. *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Nelson, Eric Sean. "Priestly Power and Damaged Life in Nietzsche and Adorno", *Nietzsche – Philosoph der Kultur(en)?*, ed. Andreas Urs Sommer. Berlin: DeGruyter, (2008), 349-356.
- Nicholls, Angus, "The Scientific Unconscious: Goethe's post-Kantian Epistemology". *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 87-120
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co., 1999.
- O'Sullivan, Liam. "Nietzsche and Pain", *Journal of Nietzsche Studies: Conscience and Pain, Tragedy and Truth*, no. 11 (Spring 1996): 13-22.
- Perkins, Richard. "The Genius and the Better Player: Superman and the Elements of Play." *International Studies in Philosophy* 15 (1983): 13-23.
- Person, Ethel S. *By Force of Fantasy: How We Make Our Lives*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Pippen, Robert B. *Nietzsche, Psychology, & First Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Plato. *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Pugh, David. *Dialectics of Love: Platonism in Schiller's Aesthetics*. Buffalo: McGill Queen's University Press, 1996.
- Reginster, Bernard. *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

- Richardson, John. *Nietzsche's System*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Ritvo, Lucille B. *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Discourses and other early political writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Emile, or On Education*, tran. Allan Bloom. U.S.A.: Basic Books, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Schelling, F.W.J. *Ausgewählte Schriften in 6 Bänden*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (German and English). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sämtliche Werke, Band V: Erzählungen, Theoretische Schriften*. München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004.
- Schneewind, J.B. "The Use of Autonomy in Ethical Theory". *Reconstructing Individualism: Authonomy, Individuality and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986, 64-75.
- Shaw, Devin Zane. *Freedom and Nature in Schelling's Philosophy of Art*. New York: Continuum, 2010.
- Snow, Dale. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Sicart, Miguel. *Play Matters*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014.
- Soderstrom, Lukas. "Nietzsche as a Reader of Wilhelm Roux, or the Physiology of History", *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, Vol. 13, 2 (2009): 55-67.
- Stiegler, Barbara. *Nietzsche et la biologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001.
- Sulloway, Frank J. *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979.
- Sutton-Smith, Brian. *The Ambiguity of Play*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

1997.

Tauber, Alfred. *Freud, The Reluctant Philosopher*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Taylor, Charles. *The Malaise of Modernity*. Toronto, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Tillich, Paul. *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, trans. Victor Nuovo. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974.

Tillette, Xavier. *Une philosophie en devenir*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1970.

Upton, Brian. *The Aesthetics of Play*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

Vater, Michael. "Introduction" in F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1978, xi-xxxvi.

White, Alan. *Schelling: An Introduction to the System of Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Whitebook, Joel, "Reflections on the Autonomous Individual and the Decentered Subject", *American Imago: Studies in Psychoanalysis and Culture*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Spring 1992): 97-116.

Whyte, Lancelot Law. *The Unconscious Before Freud*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960.

Winnicott, D.W. *Playing and Reality*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Wirth, Jason. *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and his Time*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003.

Woodmansee, Martha. *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Zupancic, Alenka. *The Odd One In: On Comedy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.